THE BOY FROM THE BLUE

CAPT. F.A.M. WEBSTER

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THE BOY FROM THE BLUE

JIM AND HIS FATHER LISTENED TO THE TALE OF THE LOST MOUNTAIN OF GOLD.

See page 13.

THE BOY FROM THE BLUE

A SCHOOL STORY

BY

F. A. M. Webster

Author of "Msango—the Witch Doctor," "The Curse of the Lion," "The Black Shadow," etc., etc.

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THE BOY FROM THE BLUE

PROLOGUE

A FORTUNE FOUND

Bob Dawson and his son Jim lay behind a breastwork of boulders, built upon the hillside, and watched the battle that raged below them. For hours it had lasted, but it was almost over now, and the broken Buloki were flying in every direction across the plains, or falling beneath the thirsty spears of the victorious and blood-drunk Wasoga warriors.

The sympathy of the white watchers was all for the vanquished. The Buloki had fought bravely for Britain in the Great War, while their present enemies had served against us with Von Lettow's German forces. Here and there little groups of the defeated strove valiantly back to back to stem the tide of victory. These took a terrible toll of their attackers, who group by group were hacked down and trampled underfoot.

Presently Jim dropped a hand upon his father's shoulder.

" There's a pretty badly wounded fellow coming up the hill path, dad."

Mr. Dawson focused his field glasses upon the fugitive, and a troubled exclamation escaped his lips.

" It's Karamanga, the old King's son," he exclaimed, " and, see, there are half-a-dozen Wasoga warriors already on his trail."

Jim took the glasses from his father's hand, and his young mouth set in a grim line.

" It'll be a shame if those Wasoga brutes get Karamanga. Can't we manage to save him ? "

Mr. Dawson shrugged his shoulders.

" It's his life or ours, I'm afraid, Jim boy."

" I'm not so certain of that, father. There aren't more than half-a-dozen men following him. We could pick them off easily enough, sling Karamanga on to the spare horse, and be away out of this before any more of the Wasoga could come up."

" They'd have a blood feud against us ever afterwards," hesitated the old hunter.

" I don't see that, dad. Not a soul knows we are here. They couldn't overtake our horses. How would they know who had saved Karamanga ? "

By this time the fugitive was less than a furlong from them. It was a case for a quick decision, since the pursuit was closing in upon him rapidly,

and he was pretty well foundered from his wounds and the pace at which he had climbed.

Jim slid the barrel of his rifle forward between two rocks, and Mr. Dawson, with a half-amused, half-anxious smile, followed his son's example. The hunter owed a lot to the kindness of the old King of the Buloki, and he was not a man to shirk the payment of a debt. The War had ruined him, but Karamanga's father, by concessions and hunting permits, had gone a good way towards putting him on his feet again, and now the old King's son was very close to death's door. In an instant the Englishman's mind was made up.

" I'll take the leader, Jim. Do you deal with the fellow in the leopard-skin cloak."

The two shots rang out so nearly together that it sounded like the report of a single rifle, but two men dropped in their tracks. Karamanga, astounded at this unexpected aid, sprang forward with renewed vigour. Again the rifles spoke, and again two Wasoga warriors went down. The remaining couple turned tail and fled headlong down the hillside.

Jim gave a low, exultant laugh and would have run forward to help the young chief up the last ascent, but Mr. Dawson dragged him down.

" Don't show yourself," he ordered. " Karamanga can make it by himself."

A moment later the native fell across their breastwork, and they saw how very badly he was wounded. Jim was already busy improvising dressings and bandages, but Mr. Dawson shook his head in doubt. He was almost certain that the young chief would never see another sun-rise.

Together they carried him to where the horses were picketed, and laid him on the grass, while they stripped the pack saddle off the spare beast. Presently they hoisted the native to its back and bound his feet together beneath its belly. Karamanga spoke no word, but his weary eyes were full of gratitude.

Now they were faced with a new difficulty, for it was impossible to travel fast with the blood oozing from the gaping wounds the native had sustained. It was equally impossible to let him rest where he was, since the Wasoga might at any moment sweep up over the crest of the hill.

With one of them supporting Karamanga on either side the Dawsons gained the plains, separated by the hills, from the field of battle ; and then, by the mercy of Providence, the swift African night shut down and hid them from any possibility of being seen by their enemies. More than once during that night they passed through grazing herds of buck and zebra, and once a disgruntled old lion turned snarling out of their path.

An hour before dawn they halted in a small valley by a swiftly-flowing stream. A fire was kindled and tea made. Karamanga was suffering terribly, but the hot refreshment revived him for a while.

"Master," he said, as Mr. Dawson bent over him, "my hour has come, and I am glad. The Wasoga have conquered our kingdom, but they do not know its secret. That I will tell to you, for you have done your best to save me."

"Don't worry about the kingdom, Karamanga," answered Mr. Dawson. "If your father is still alive, the English will restore it to him. The Wasoga are our dogs now, and they must learn to bend to our will."

"My father is dead, master. But Kilima Mali remains."

"The Hill of Riches, eh? I've heard rumours of that. Is there really such a place, Karamanga?"

The native bowed his head in assent.

"I will tell you how to find it, master."

From then until the dawn was nearly come, Jim and his father listened to the tale of the lost mountain of gold, from which the Buloki for hundreds of generations had dug the precious metal wherewith their beautiful bangles, anklets, and other ornaments of soft, malleable gold were fashioned. And then, with the first pale fingers of day tinging the

Eastern sky, Karamanga fell back, and his life passed out on the dawn wind.

A month later the hunter and his son marched North again with the column of King's African Rifles which was despatched to punish the Wasoga who had broken the King's peace, but before he left Nairobi Mr. Dawson had obtained a prospector's licence. When they returned in the autumn to the capital of Kenya Colony they brought samples of gold with them and registered the claims they had staked on the Hill of Riches, which they had found easily enough by following Karamanga's directions.

" This means England and Oxford for you, my son," said Bob Dawson, as he and Jim sat in the Stanley Hotel one evening.

Jim looked up in startled surprise.

" I'm a man now, as we reckon manhood out here," he protested. " What sort of a figure do you think I should cut at an English public school or a university ? "

" You may be a man in most things, but you've got precious little education," Mr. Dawson answered. " Your grandfather was a gentleman, and an Oxford Blue at that, and you're going to have your chance."

" You talk as if you were not a gentleman yourself, dad," said Jim hotly.

" My son, I am not. I've no delusions upon that subject. I ran away to sea when I was fourteen, and I've been knocking about the world ever since. It's been a liberal enough education of sorts, I admit, but not the sort that leads a man to the high places."

Jim tried another tack.

" It's rotten wanting me to leave you when there are only just us two alone in the world together," he grumbled.

" There's no good in arguing about it, Jim," said his father, with a kindly smile. " As soon as I knew we were on to a fortune I cabled home. Your passage is booked on the *Durham Castle*, and you start school at Brankstone next spring."

" Are you coming home as well, dad ? "

" Not yet awhile, old fellow. I'll have to wait until the mine is in full working order. Besides, you'll find your feet more quickly by yourself."

" I'm just going to hate the whole blessed business, I know that," said Jim.

CHAPTER I

THE NEW BOY AT BRANKSTONE

"HULLO, Phil, what's the news?"

Joe Holland strolled into Phil Blake's study and flung himself down into an arm chair.

"Too early to say as yet," Blake answered. "I only got back myself an hour ago. Had good holidays?"

"Simply ripping. Any amount of hunting and some quite good Rugger up in Yorkshire. Some of those fellows can play. We shall be a bit weak this term, by that same token."

"Yes, Verity, Boscher, Salmon, and Hodges have all left. Still, the pack is sound, and there are some likely threequarters among the Colts and Seconds."

"Any new talent, d'you suppose?"

"Not very likely. Most fellows go right through Brankstone. I've never yet known a 'has-been' from another school who was any blamed good."

Joe smiled.

"What an old loyalist it is!" he chuckled. "So we've no new big fellows?"

" There's one new chap in Sivart's who'll take a bit of placing. He might be a crammer's pup or a colonial. The latter, I fancy. He's fine-drawn and burned pretty nearly black.

" May be a half-caste."

" I think not. Too much of the smack of authority about him."

" You've found that out pretty quickly."

" Yes. I happened to be in Sivart's house just before lunch. A couple of darkies got into the new fellow's way going into the hall, and he said something to them in some sort of guttural dialect that seemed to shrivel them up."

" Sounds interesting. Let's look him up and see if he plays Rugger."

Joe Holland was very nearly a monomaniac where Rugby football was concerned. Brankstone had big traditions for the game, and he had been captain of the undefeated 1st XV for the last two seasons. Blake, as head of Hooper's, which was cock-house, was nearly as bad.

Jim Dawson's study was a revelation to the two boys who went to call on him. A bundle of new school books lay on a corner of the table, but the shelves were innocent of literature, and there was only one picture, an enlargement of a snapshot portraying a grizzled old fellow, who looked as if he might be an Australian bush-ranger. Around

the walls were hung some fine trophy heads of big-game, several native spears, and a serviceable-looking revolver in a much worn holster.

" My aunt ! " exclaimed Joe, as his eyes fell upon the weapon. " There'll be the dickens to pay when Sivart sees that."

Jim expressed polite surprise.

" Don't you practise pistol shooting ? " he queried.

The boys gaped at him, and then Phil burst into a laugh.

" Say, stranger, where do *you* come from ? " he drawled.

" Oh, I'm from Africa ! " Jim answered.

" Grahamstown, King Edward's, or Jeppe ? " queried Joe, naming three famous South African schools.

" Wrong every time," smiled Jim. " My father taught me to read and write and add, and I've had six months with a tutor since I came home."

" Fond of sport ? " was the next query.

" Rather ! " came the enthusiastic answer.

" Where do you play ? "

" I beg your pardon ? "

" Holland means are you a full-back, a half, a threequarters, or a forward," Blake intervened.

" Oh, I see ! Football ? "

" Yes. We play Rugger here, of course."

" I've never played football."

" Is cricket your game, then ? "

" No. I've never played cricket either."

A surprised look passed between the visitors.

" I suppose you box ? " suggested Blake.

" If you mean glove-fighting, I'm afraid I don't know much about it ; but I've had my share of ' cut and come again ' scraps, of course."

Again Blake and Holland looked at one another. This chap was really a bit beyond them.

" Are you going to play any games here ? " asked Holland.

" Got to, according to the *mkubwa* boss," Jim responded.

" You mean the Headmaster ? "

" I expect so."

Joe laughed.

" Turn out on Big Side to-morrow, Dawson," he said, " and we'll see what we can do to teach you Rugger."

As the two boys re-crossed the big quadrangle on their way back to Hooper's house, Joe slipped his arm within Phil's.

" The fellow's a bit of a ' hairy ' at present, but I'm hanged if I don't like him," he volunteered.

" How old is he, d'you suppose ? " Phil queried.

" 'Bout seventeen, I should think. Those were Fifth Form books on his table."

"We shan't see much of him, then, since the Sixth and the Fifth don't mix."

"Except on the footer field."

"Oh, that! My dear man, you don't expect—or do you?—that a chap who's never kicked a ball in his life is going to make a player in five minutes?"

"You never know. He's a likely-looking cuss, and you heard what he said about 'cut and come again' scrapping. It seems to me he's got the Rugger spirit, and it won't surprise me to find that he possesses a pretty good turn of speed. The rest can be learned."

"Who's the giddy optimist now?" grinned Phil.

CHAPTER II

THE FEUD BEGINS

That night Jim, for the first time in his life, shared a bedroom with a number of other boys. He wondered why they were all staring at him when he had finished pulling off his vest, but it never entered his head that they were speculating as to how he had come by the long scar which showed red from the base of the ribs to his shoulder blade, or that they should wonder at the big hunting-knife which dangled from his belt.

There was a good deal of horse-play after the lights were out, but, for some reason, the new boy was not favoured with the attentions of the practical jokers. This was probably due to the fact that no one had as yet quite placed him. Moreover, he had stripped remarkably well, and there was a look of steadfast purpose about him that must serve as a warning to all but the most heedless.

Several times during the night he found himself suddenly wide awake, as some uneasy sleeper stirred, and once he got up and stole silently to the

window at the sound of something moving in the grounds outside, and it might have been noticed that he had his hunting-knife in his hand. Altogether, a curious sort of boy to be pitchforked into the peculiar life of an English public school.

At the first sign of dawn in the sky he wakened, but finding it was not yet time to get up, turned over and went to sleep again. Later, when the school bell rang, he did not hear it, and the monitor in charge of the room told him several times to get up before he took any notice. Then he opened his eyes only to tell the other boy to mind his own infernal business.

With any other boy Jobson would have taken very short measures, but there had been something in the look of this fellow Dawson that made him think twice before having recourse to his usual methods. The small incident of a boy named Phipps overturning a jug of water gave Jobson, who was a thoroughgoing bully, a much-needed excuse for transferring his attentions elsewhere.

"You clumsy young brute!" he stormed, as he swung round on the shrinking offender. "I'll teach you to make such a filthy mess in my dormitory."

The boy tried to dodge the blow, but the great leg of mutton hand caught him on the side of the head and sent him staggering across the room. As little

Phipps picked himself up the bully seized him by the wrist and twisted his arm behind his back until the wretched youngster fairly howled for mercy.

The next instant something remarkably like a tornado struck Jobson, and he turned to find himself facing a pyjama-clad figure with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

" You beast ! " barked Jim. " I'll teach you ! "

That which followed was a source of satisfaction to Number Three Dormitory, except, of course, Jobson, for quite a long time afterwards. No one was ever able to explain clearly to anxious enquirers from other dormitories what actually happened, but they were clear that no such method of fighting had ever been seen before at Brankstone, and equally certain that Jim would have finished Jobson, had the rest of them not combined to pull him off his opponent when it was obvious that the matter had gone far enough.

Jim, strangely enough, was hardly at all marked ; but Jobson was a sight, when he appeared in morning school, to gladden the heart of more than one small boy who had cause to regret his attentions in the past. If any of the masters entertained a suspicion of what had been happening they made no comment, for masters know far more of what goes on behind the scenes than the boys ever

realise ; and they know too that in certain circumstances boys are far more ruthless in educating and correcting each other than they themselves would ever dare to be in correcting them.

The new boy's first excursions into the realms of Rugby football were hardly less amazing than his early morning performance in Number Three Dormitory. To begin with, he contravened pretty well every rule of the game, leaving even his opponents almost helpless with laughter at his blunders. He was supposed to be a threequarter, but he followed the ball everywhere with dogged tenacity, got off side, passed forward, tackled high, and committed every possible solecism.

The first boy who attempted to tackle him he laid out with a terrible punch, which Holland, who was refereeing the game, chose to treat as a too vigorous hand-off. He did, however, stop the game for a moment to explain the principles of both handing-off and tackling to the tyro.

When once Jim understood what was required of him, matters began to improve. He possessed an amazing turn of speed, and a natural swerve and side step which made the master on the touch line, who looked after the coaching at Brankstone, sit up and take notice. It was, however, Jim's defensive play that improved most rapidly. For fifty minutes he tried to get the hang of things, before

he realised that the real secret of successful tackling is to 'go low.' After that the way in which he flung himself with a straight dive at the ankles of his opponents was a sight for sore eyes.

As the teams left the field Holland took Jim by the arm.

"We'll make a footballer of you yet, Dawson," he said, with a broad grin. "Come along up to my study and have some tea; you've made my sides ache with laughing this afternoon, but I'll bet there are more fellows whose ribs will be sore from other causes."

He cast a quick sideways glance at his companion, but Jim, apparently, was impervious to the remark. Later, as they sat and toasted their muddy boots before Joe's fire, the captain referred again to the subject of Jim's play.

"You've got a big future before you, I believe, Dawson, but go easy with the rough stuff. Play as strenuously as you possibly can, of course, and let it go at that."

Jim treated the Rugger captain to a long, level stare.

"You told me to put my man down hard when I tackled him," he said at length. "Did I do more than that?"

"Well, not exactly," Joe temporised, "but we always hand-off with the palm, you know. The

fist must never be clenched ; the hand-off, in fact, is a push—not a punch."

Jim reddened slightly, for he had been too nearly his own master all his life to relish criticism over much, but he said nothing further. For a while the boys talked school " shop," and then Jim rose rather slowly.

" Great snakes ! " he cried. " I've been eight-and-forty hours in the saddle at a stretch before this, and not dismounted anything like as stiff as I feel now."

" That'll pass when you've played a few more games," Joe answered him, and asked, " D'you get much hunting in your country ? "

" Big-game ? "

" No, fox hunting."

Jim grinned.

" There are the Massasi Fox-hounds at Nairobi. They hunt jackal in the ordinary way, but the only thing I've ever heard of them killing was an old lady's pet monkey. Hounds went in through the window, ran it to earth under her bed, and nearly gave her an apoplectic fit."

Joe roared with laughter.

" You must come and stay with us and tell that tale to my guv'nor, Dawson," he said. " He hunts the pack in our parts and can show you some pretty good sport."

On his way back to Sivart's Jim walked into Jobson. The new boy stopped with hand frankly held out. They had had their scrap, and he was quite ready to be friends. But not so the monitor. He glowered at Jim through two black eyes.

" When I want your friendship, Dawson, I'll ask for it," he said. " Meanwhile I'll just tell you that I think you're a beastly cad. In a fair fight I could lick you into a cocked hat, but we're not used to pot-house methods of fighting at Brankstone."

" Don't know what a pot-house is," grinned Jim, " but we don't bear malice after we're fairly beaten, where I come from. But I suppose you know your own code best. I'll be willing to oblige you with the gloves any time you like, if that's what you want."

" I'll get even with you in my own way," said Jobson darkly, and Jim strolled on with a disdainful shrug of the shoulders.

The business did not bother him a button, but, for all that, he had made a far worse foe than he realised. He was to make another and a much more powerful enemy before the week was out.

CHAPTER III

A FRESH ENEMY

Mr. Andrew Mitchell was a discontented Aberdonian, but a brilliant scholar for all that. As a mathematical coach it would have been hard to find his equal, and to that circumstance he owed his mastership at Brankstone. The cause of his discontent lay in the fact that he had missed his Rugger blue. Nothing would convince him that a better man had gained the coveted position at stand-off half ; he believed firmly that he had been denied his place through the personal dislike and possible jealousy of a famous South African who had skippered Oxford in the years just before the War, when he was " up."

Jim, in consequence, started with a big handicap in Mitchell's form. The master disliked all colonials and detested those who hailed from any part of Africa. He soon discovered Jim's weak points, for he was almost uncannily clever himself, and lost no single opportunity of showing the boy up before his school-fellows. One favourite jibe,

specially reserved for Jim's mathematical blunders, was—

"I suppose you reckon by counting heads in your part of the world, Dawson?"

Jim was no patient long-sufferer and did not improve matters by answering, at the tenth time of asking :

"That's right, sir, and sometimes we crack them, when their wearers become wearisome."

A snigger of laughter had run round the form, and the master had blazed up into a royal rage. He had, however, failed to draw Jim, who felt perfectly satisfied with the point he had scored.

Jim's life at school went on in this way for the first three weeks of term. The master gave his tongue unbridled rein, his jibes became more bitter than ever, but the boy never again answered him back. Jim Dawson had not hunted the biggest of big game with his father in the wildest parts of Africa without having learned how to bide his time and keep his temper.

The first brush had given the Fifth a faint hope that the new fellow was going to show them some fun with Mitchell ; but when Jim seemed to swallow all insults and to take submissively all the impositions that were heaped upon him, they rather fancied that he had been given a private word of

warning, or else was not quite the young fire-eater his scrap with Jobson and his pert answer to the master had at first suggested.

His work in form was far from brilliant. Six months' hard cramming with a first-class tutor after his arrival in England had put a polish upon such rough and ready schooling as he had received in Africa, while Dr. Harvey had considered it advisable to put the new boy into the Fifth Form on account of his age and antecedents. Jim had a good head for figures and so managed to stumble through mathematics ; instead of Greek he was allowed to take German, of which language he had a good working knowledge. His real bugbear was Latin. To Jim the " dead " language was not only dead, but pretty well putrid. All his early training in Africa had taught him to value things for their practical use, and he simply could not see that a language like Latin was going to be of the slightest service to him in after life. Nevertheless, his tutor had given him a good grounding, and with this and the further help of certain unofficial text books, such as " Aids to Translation," he continued to struggle with the classics the Fifth were doing that term. Here, in fact, he fared better than in most other subjects, since Dr. Harvey, who knew the boy's limitations, had given instructions that he was to be helped as much as possible with

his Latin, and was to be let down lightly, so long as he was honestly trying.

Therein lay the real trouble. Jim worked conscientiously enough, but his heart was not in that particular job, simply because the subject did not interest him in the first place, and, secondly, it seemed to him a waste of time to slave away at the learning of a language which no one ever spoke.

Then there was the question of his football! Holland and Blake and the other fellows at the top of the tree had been awfully decent, but Jim had no criterion by which to judge his own merits, and, meanwhile, the school, as a whole, was anxious to know what the dickens old Holland meant by keeping the new-comer in the Shell, that section of their football world wherein boys with the best chance of a place in the Fifteen were given special coaching by the Reverend Alan Stewart, an old Scottish International, whose subtlety and guile had created so many almost unbeatable Brankstone sides. The master and the captain, however, knew what they were about, and both were fully convinced that they had a real " find " in Jim Dawson.

" Mind you, Holland," Mr. Stewart remarked upon more than one occasion, " the lad has it all to learn, but saw ye ever the like of his swerve and side step? Did you ever see a fellow of his

age who could run faster? And as for his tackling, why, there's been nothing like it since the days when Percy Royds played for England."

"And yet the school is grumbling because we keep him in the Shell, sir."

"Let them grumble," scoffed Mr. Stewart; "we shall see what we shall see—and so will they."

"I suppose you've heard, sir, that the Sledford forwards are fast and above ordinary big this year?" Holland queried. "We don't know, of course, how Dawson would stand up against weight and pace."

Sledford was the only school match that Brankstone played in the Easter term. The rest were club fixtures, all their other school matches taking place before Christmas. But, for some time-honoured reason, the Sledford match was *the* event of the school Rugby year, and every good Brankstonian would rather see his side beat Sledford than vanquish any three other teams.

"Aye, we've got to beat Sledford again this year," answered the master. "You'd best play Dawson in the Probables next Wednesday."

Joe regarded that proposition with a good deal of doubt.

"I was thinking of putting him at centre-three for the Possibles, sir."

"That's no good, Holland. He won't be facing the pace and weight that way."

The Reverend Alan's pronouncement was due to a peculiar custom which still prevails at Brankstone. Early in each term the Probables are picked to play the best of the Possibles, whose side is considerably strengthened by the inclusion of as many masters as are considered up to or above the standard of play of the First Fifteen.

"Very well, sir," Joe agreed. "I'll put him opposite to Mr. Mitchell; he will be quite the fastest and cleverest player on the field. If Dawson can look after him, then I don't think there will be any doubt about his being worth his place in the team to meet Sledford."

Had the captain or the coach known of the feelings existing between Jim and his form master, they might possibly have hesitated to oppose them so directly to one another. But they did not know, and so the lists went up.

When Jim sauntered up to the notice board and read them, a grin of great contentment spread across his features. He loved this rough and tumble game, so essentially British in all its characteristics. For three weeks he had suffered in silence, except for that one retort, under the bitter lashings of Michell's vitriolic tongue, and he had spent hours on impositions, many of which he felt he had

not fairly earned. Now they were to meet on a field where there was neither fear nor favour, and where, so long as the game was played fairly, hard knocks could be given and received, and there was no difference in the status of master and pupil. Jim told himself that he would be fair enough in all conscience, but that he would do Mitchell proud he was very fully determined. And so the grin spread wider still. Joe Holland saw it and put it down to quite another cause.

"Glad to be playing for the Probables, Dawson?" he queried. "I'll let you into a secret if you like."

"It's very decent of you to give me such a chance, Holland," Jim answered. "What's your secret?"

"You look after Mitchell to-morrow. If you can hold him, you'll be well on your way to winning a place in the First Fifteen against Sledford."

"You mean that? Then you just leave Master Mitchell to me and have a stretcher handy."

Joe Holland chuckled at what he considered an excellent joke, and the two boys strolled off together to "keep a chapel."

That night Jim went over his footer kit with the same painstaking care that he would have given to his preparations for a lion hunt out in Africa, where a man's life depends so often upon his

forethought and previous attention to the smallest details. He put new laces in his boots, tested the tightness of his studs, saw that every button was tight on his blue bags, and even tested the strength of his jersey.

To every one's amazement, and the no small amusement of most, he turned up at the field upon the following afternoon wearing long bags over his footer breeches and a sweater over his jersey, nor did he take them off during the preliminary punt about. Many of the boys laughed at him, but the wise old cricket "pro," who had run at Powderhall in his day, remarked to the school sergeant, with whom he had come to the ground to witness the match :

"That's a fly young card, Jenkins. You don't find many grown men among the amateurs who know the value of keeping warm until the game begins or the race is called on."

"Is that so?" said the beribboned old soldier. "I should have called it plain swank myself."

"An' you'd have been wrong, Jenkins," Tolody answered briskly. "That boy'll be showing us something at the sports towards the end of the term. You mark my words."

In point of fact the cricketer was only right in part. Jim had no experience of athletics, but had picked up the tip about keeping warm from a

first-class athletics text book he had been reading lately.

The majority of the players were slow in getting going when Holland kicked off for the Probables, since their muscles had become deadened and stiff with standing about, for there was a bitter wind blowing. Blake, for the Possibles, caught the ball from the kick-off, and passed it to Mitchell. The master, not yet warmed up, was not too quick in getting going, and Jim was on to him like a flash of lightning. The boy tackled fairly high, and Mr. Stewart noted, with some surprise, that he put his man down amazingly hard with that particular twist which, hitherto, had been a peculiarly characteristic trick of the great English International, Colin Laird.

"Now I wonder where Dawson learned that tackle," the old International said to the Head, with whom he was standing. "I don't think Mitchell altogether liked it. He's none too fond of a rough and tumble."

"You think not?" queried Dr. Harvey.

"I know it," Stewart answered. "Between you and me, that was why he never got his place in the Oxford side. Just look at that boy," he exclaimed.

Jim had intercepted a low pass, gathering the ball almost from the ground at full speed, and now was

streaking towards the Possibles' line with the sinuous rapidity of a rattle-snake racing through grass. Never a finger was laid upon him, for his feet seemed to weave a maze as he side-stepped or swerved or " sold the dummy."

He had worked far over to the right, and the full-back failed to stop him. Now he turned inwards towards the centre, completely ignoring the open line that lay before him. Mitchell was coming across at tremendous speed to intercept him before he could score under the posts, as was obviously his intention. It was equally obvious that Jim must be aware of the threat to his try from the master, and yet he seemed to regulate his speed so that they were sure to meet just short of the posts.

Holland was puzzled, and Stewart almost dancing with annoyance. It looked as if Jim was about to throw away a certain try. But when Mitchell dived for his legs the boy made a movement between a sideways jump and a swerve. As he did so his left hand shot out to the back of the master's neck and thrust him hard, face downwards, in the mud. Then he dashed over him and touched down.

It was an amazing business, for his speed had hardly seemed to flag, but Stewart, who knew perfect timing when he saw it, realised that the whole incident was deliberate. Every one else

was bewildered, except the Fifth Form, who knew what they knew and chortled accordingly.

As the game progressed Stewart became more and more interested. Holland had told him of his orders to Jim to mark Mitchell, and those orders the boy was executing to perfection. Neither the weight, speed, nor football cleverness of the master seemed to worry Jim. He followed the master everywhere, and he grassed him good and hard or handed him off with equal vigour, just as the occasion served.

The one thing Stewart feared most desperately was that Jim would go too far. He had a very shrewd suspicion of the underlying causes behind all that hard tackling, for he knew Mitchell for a pompous fool in Common Room and a bit of a bully among the boys, and he was not altogether unhappy at the rough handling his fellow " beak " was receiving. But still he did hope that young Dawson would not do anything foolish. The boy was a football genius, and he did not want him to start his career with an unsavoury reputation for wilful roughness.

At half-time, when he went out to talk to the teams, he tried to drop a hint, but Jim grinned wickedly.

" Only obeying orders, Padre dear," he laughed.

" Eh ? " exclaimed the surprised master.

" I beg your pardon, sir," said Jim, " but we are very fond of our parsons out at home, and always address them as ' Padre dear.' I forgot for the moment."

" That's all right, Dawson," the Reverend Alan answered. " You're playing a fine game ; don't spoil it by breaking any one's neck."

" That's what I call a proper muscular Christian," said Jim to Holland, as he danced on his toes to keep his muscles from stiffening and watched the master move off to the touch line.

Stewart had had a quiet word with Holland in the interval, and when play was resumed Jim found himself on the far side of the field from Mr. Mitchell. The Probables were playing now with the high wind, against which they had battled during the whole of the first half, but still the weight of the masters in the tight scrums and the speed of Mitchell and a Blue, named Rice, behind kept matters pretty even.

Ten minutes from time Rice scored a beautiful try far out, but failed to convert it, thus placing the Possibles three points ahead and leaving the Probables in the position of wanting a try to equalise or a goal to win. The forwards over-ran the ball at the kick-off, and a scrum was formed on the centre line.

" Wheel and take ! "

The Probables' pack, pushing their hardest, obeyed the order, and Joe Holland broke through, the ball bouncing beautifully against his shins, as he led his forwards to a desperate raid on the enemy's line. Higher and higher bounced the ball ; at last he caught it in his hands and slung a pass to the right. Hargreaves, relying on the strength of the wind behind him, tried a long drop at goal. The ball flew straight and true, and Mitchell caught it and made a mark.

Then a most amazing thing happened. The master's kick against the wind rose straight into the air, and the ball was blown back. While the forwards were waiting for it to come down Jim Dawson dashed forward, leaped clean over them, caught the ball as he landed, and fell over the line for a try, which Holland had no difficulty in converting.

Mr. Stewart went back to his house well satisfied, for once again his Rugby judgment had been justified. Far less pleased was Mr. Mitchell. Pompous he may have been, nay, certainly was ; but, in other respects, he was no fool ; and so he realised clearly that Jim had revenged himself right royally for the pains he had been forced to suffer in school without the chance of hitting back. He had, moreover, touched the master in his tenderest part, since, when Mr. Mitchell played, he liked to

play much better than every one else on the field, so that the spectators might realise what a grave injustice he had suffered in being denied his blue at Oxford. He had many times met players as good as himself, of course, but never before had he been opposed to one so infinitely his superior as was this boy from East Africa.

The following morning Joe Holland pinned up on the games notice board the names of the team to meet Sledford on the following Saturday, and that of Jim Dawson was amongst them.

Mitchell made the selection of the First Fifteen the occasion of a pseudo-panegyric at the morning session of the Fifth Form. He sang the praises of the three boys in his class who had gained the distinction of a place in the side, but pointed out that skill in games did not always coincide with brains for study.

"I exclude you from my remarks, Harper"—this to the head of the form, who was playing full-back—"and Soames may possibly pass muster; but our Afrikander is a horse of another colour. Work does not come too easily to us, eh, my Dawson?"

Mitchell was seated on a window-sill, and his foot slid along the form administering to Jim a playful kick. The boy started, and his face flushed crimson to the roots of his hair, and yet he made no sign.

" We conceive ourselves, no doubt, to have achieved a most enviable distinction in the short time we have been at the school, eh ? "

Again the prodding foot slid along the form, and Jim trembled like a startled thoroughbred.

" We think, possibly, that we are the equals of those set in authority over us, but we may learn that such matters as scholarship are not to be altogether lightly acquired, nor those who are scholars too readily flouted. Now there was a small matter of logarithms to be prepared for me this morning, Dawson. I suppose your head was far too high among the clouds last night for you to consider such mundane matters ? "

Still Jim did not answer to the jibing, and for a moment the master let his temper get the better of him. He leaned forward and took a piece of the boy's hair at the nape of the neck between finger and thumb and tugged it sharply upwards.

" Eh, my inky one ? " he queried.

Andrew Mitchell had worked that particularly painful trick on hundreds of smaller boys before. Usually it had produced a tearful and immediate answer. This time his wrist was caught in a grip as cold and as strong as steel, and his hand was removed slowly and quite gently. Then to his surprise he saw that Jim was going steadily on with his work.

This boy baffled him completely. There had been no outcry of pain, no protest, not even the angry complaint he had half expected from a lad of Jim's age and temperament. Nothing but that one quiet gesture. The master went back to his desk, and the class resumed its work. Many of the boys in that form had seen Jim handle Bully Jobson, and they had held their breath during the course of Mitchell's baiting.

The remainder of the session passed in an almost abnormal quietness. But when it was over and the other boys gathered up their books and trooped out of the room, Jim sat on. When the last of them had gone, he walked over to the master's desk.

" There's just one thing I want to tell you, sir," he said to the surprised master. " It is this. If the Headmaster chose to beat me with a cane I should make no complaint, for that is his right. But I do not like being handled, and, if you touch me again as you touched me this morning, I shall resent it—physically. That is the only means of retaliation I know of."

He spoke with a slight stutter, for he was bubbling over with rage and was hard put to it to hold himself in check. He did not wait for an answer, nor did he speak to any of the boys who were hanging about expectantly in the corridor. He

went straight to his study and locked the door behind him. Then slow bitter tears welled slowly from his eyes, for he had been manhandled for the first time in his life without hitting back, and the thought of it made him feel unclean. The portrait of his father caught his eye, and at length he was glad that he had had the strength to master his natural instinct and inclinations.

Meanwhile the boys in the corridor had seen Mitchell leave his class-room with a face as red as a turkey-cock, and make his way towards the Headmaster's study.

" Golly," said one boy, " here's a go ! Dawson comes out with his nose twitching like a jolly old war-horse ; he was all white and drawn about the gills and, I'll swear, close on blubbing. Then Mitchell makes off to the Head carrying such a pressure of steam that he might burst any minute. What wouldn't I give to know what Dawson said to him and he said to Dawson ! "

" Strikes me that what he'll say to Chief will be more important still," suggested another.

" Well, Jim didn't hit him, and that's a miracle to my mind," volunteered a third.

" If Dawson gets into trouble it'll be a beastly shame," interposed a monitor. " It's all very well for Mitchell to play those tricks on Lower School kids, but he really ought not to try them on *us*."

Mr. Mitchell had evidently arrived at the same conclusion by the time he reached the Headmaster's door, for he passed that grim portal without knocking and proceeded on his way to the Common Room. In that sanctum of authority matters were not improved by a number of the younger masters, led by Rice, roasting him soundly about the way he had been handled and mastered upon the previous afternoon by a boy who was admittedly a novice at the game.

Had he taken his baiting in good part, or even resorted to a little rough horse-play, all would have been well, but he chose to stand upon his dignity, recapitulated his career at Oxford, and retold the tale of the gross injustice suffered at the hands of the South African captain—a mere Rhodes scholar —who had denied him his blue, and finally flounced out of the room in a temper, made infinitely more vile by the roar of laughter that followed his exit.

" For goodness' sake, you fellows, let him be," said the Reverend Alan, from an armchair by the fire. " He can't hit back at us, remember, and so he'll take it out of some unfortunate youngster."

" That's all very well," said Rice, " but he's got to have the conceit knocked out of him somehow. Besides, he was the next best thing to a conscientious

objector during the War—couldn't be spared from the command of the School O.T.C.—wasn't that the excuse ? "

" I don't know," said another master, " but Sergeant Jenkins doesn't love him."

" Does anybody ? " asked the disgusted Rice.

CHAPTER IV

TWO FRIENDS ARE FOUND

The Reverend Alan was a "downy bird," and it was said of him that it was his extreme subtlety and almost uncanny anticipation of an opponent's plans that had distinguished him as one of the most brilliant stand-off halves who had ever played for Scotland. He was very wise in other ways as well. The extraordinarily strenuous exchanges he had witnessed between Mr. Mitchell and the new boy in yesterday's match had set him thinking, and the tirade the master had let loose in the Common Room had gone a long way towards confirming his suspicions.

He was house-tutor at Sivart's and noticed that Jim did not put in an appearance at tea-time. An hour later, when all the lower form boys had settled down to their "prep," he strolled along to Jim's study, knocked on the door, and waited for an invitation to enter. That was one of the things the boys liked about the Padre. If he went to see a fellow in his study he forgot that he was a master,

and behaved himself as a guest. For that reason most boys were eager to make him welcome.

Jim called out " Come in," and rose to his feet, as soon as he recognised the master.

" Can you spare a few minutes for a chat, Dawson ? "

" Rather, sir," Jim answered, and drew forward his best arm-chair.

" Luxurious beggars, you chaps are," said the Reverend Alan, as he settled himself comfortably in the cushioned depths. " Mind if I smoke ? "

" I wish you would, sir."

" I suppose you smoked yourself out in Africa ? "

Jim grinned his assent.

" Won't hurt you to give it up for a bit. A man can't smoke and play first-class Rugger, you know."

" Do you think I might ever be first-class, Padre—I mean, sir ? "

" Never mind the ' sir,' Dawson. You can call me Padre, in private, if it comes more naturally to you."

" Thank you."

" And about your Rugger. I think you may become very good indeed, but you must play a general game ; I mean don't make your play so much of an—ah—individual scalp-hunt, as you did to-day."

He smiled at Jim's obvious embarrassment.

"How goes the work?" he queried, striving after first causes for the enmity that he felt pretty certain existed between the boy and his form master.

"Not too well, sir," Jim admitted ruefully. "You see, Padre, I had practically no schooling before I came to England. I find the Maths. most frightfully difficult, and the Latin seems terribly dry stuff to me."

The Reverend Alan thought for a long moment, puffing lazily at his pipe.

"Chuck me over that Virgil," he said at length.

He sank still deeper in the big arm-chair and, with eyes half-closed to hide the fire of his own enthusiasm, he recited rather than read some sonorous lines. Without pausing to give his listener time to offer a comment, he translated into English that which he had recited in Latin.

Jim sat silent. New vistas were opening up before him and his interest was aroused.

"Not such bad stuff, eh?" smiled the Reverend Alan, and pitched the book back on to the table.

"Padre, you've made me see Latin in a different light."

"I thought I might be able to do so. Now what about these Maths.? Pull your chair up to the table and let's have a go at them. We sportsmen must

show the doubters that brains and brawn can work together, you know."

For an hour the two worked steadily before the master rose, stretched himself, and re-lit his pipe.

"I'll look you up again at times, Dawson. Meanwhile, you can always come along to me if you get into difficulties."

Jim sat still for some time after he was left alone. Then he picked up the Virgil. He had hated Latin from the very first, but Stewart, who loved it, had made it seem wonderful to him. Those Maths., too! Perhaps, after all, they were not so very difficult. Jim's "prep" was finished already, but he put in an extra hour trying to get a better hang of things.

Across in Hooper's Joe Holland was pondering a problem. He too had noticed how entirely the attentions of Dawson had been devoted to his form master and, in addition, had heard several things from Harper of the First Fifteen and Fifth Form. He was wondering now if Jim would display the same brilliancy in the Sledford match as he had shown when placed opposite to a master who apparently he had every cause to dislike.

In fact, the Reverend Alan and the Rugby captain had arrived at much the same conclusion. The following Saturday, they thought, would prove his worth. But such was not to be the case.

All through Thursday night snow fell, Friday saw the ground frozen fast, and Saturday found the boys of Brankstone disporting themselves on the ice. At this form of amusement Jim cut a sorry figure, to the no small delight of Jobson and one or two other boys Jim had offended by his bluntly-pronounced opinions upon various subjects.

It was a time-honoured custom at Brankstone that the school should have skating sports in such years as the ice could be found for their celebration. Therefore an extra half-holiday was granted on Monday by Dr. Harvey for the holding of the races. It never occurred to Jim that he would be expected to turn up and cheer for his house in the relays. He himself could not skate, and the weather was beastly cold into the bargain. After lunch he sat down by his study fire and wrote a long letter to his father. From time to time he glanced up at the portrait over the mantelshelf ; at others his gaze wandered from one to another of his hunting trophies hung around the walls. By the time the letter was finished he was thoroughly homesick for the good comradeship of old Bob Dawson and the warmth of the African sun.

For a while he sat on by the fire, trying to concentrate his attention upon a book. It was no good ; the restless mood that had sent his father wandering across the world almost before he was

into his " teens " was upon him, and he could not sit still. Presently he found himself wandering disconsolately down towards the Fives Court, thoroughly bored with everything. The sudden sharp crack of a rifle shot brought him up " all standing," in a manner of speaking. He listened keenly, and when a second report rang out he realised that some one was busy at the miniature rifle range.

He entered the building and found the school sergeant busily engaged piling up bulls by himself.

" 'Afternoon, Muster Dawson," said the old soldier. " I've been wantin' a word with you. That grand game you played last Wednesday showed me that you've got the proper fightin' spirit. Now what about joinin' the O.T.C. ? "

At Brankstone joining the Corps was not compulsory, and, since Mitchell commanded it, Jim had made up his mind not to join.

" Nothing doing, Sergeant," smiled Jim, " but I'll tell you what I will do."

" What's that, sir ? "

" I'll shoot you for five bob, best out of twenty rounds, if you like."

A broad smile overspread the Sergeant's mahogany face. This sounded almost too much like easy money to be true.

" Well, I don't know as there's any reg'lation

against *that*, Muster Dawson. How shall we shoot ? "

" Toss for first go and fire five rounds apiece in rotation afterwards."

Jim won the toss and at the end of half-an-hour the Sergeant got up from the mat with a deep chuckle, for each of them had scored a possible.

" Pity about your not pouching my five bob, isn't it, Sergeant ? " mocked Jim. " Care to take me on at revolver shooting ? "

" We haven't got any revolvers—except the one Mr. Mitchell carries."

" No, but I have."

" What, here ? "

" Up in my study."

" Then you keep it mighty dark, Muster Dawson."

" Don't you think we might have just one small shoot ? " Jim pleaded.

The Sergeant considered. Every one was away at the ice sports. After all, there couldn't be any harm in it. Five minutes later Jim came back with his overcoat pocket bulging. Before they commenced he laid down a ten shilling note.

" That's to pay my footing. We'll shoot for the fun of the thing." He pulled a playing card from his pocket and pinned it on to the target board. " Now watch."

And the Sergeant did watch with all his eyes, as Jim picked out each of the five heart spots at twenty-five yards range. Next he placed a card so that only its edge was towards him, and at the same range cut it neatly in halves at the third shot.

"That's bad," he said, with a shake of the head; "I'm a bit out of practice."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Sergeant. "In nigh on thirty years of soldiering I've never seen the like. You'll *have* to join the Corps, Muster Dawson; we shall need you in the team that'll go to Bisley for the Ashburton Shield next summer."

"We'll see about that a bit later on. Care to try her yourself?"

Jim passed the heavy Colt to the Sergeant, and at that moment the door was flung open.

"What's going on here?" demanded Mr. Mitchell.

"I was just showing the young gentleman a little fancy shooting, sir," said the Sergeant, before Jim could answer.

The master picked up the mutilated five of hearts and looked at it in astonishment.

"I'd no idea that you could shoot like this, Jenkins; nor did I know that you were in possession of a Service revolver. Do not use it on the school premises again."

" Very good, sir."

Mitchell swung round on Jim.

" Why are you not down at Long Holm ? "

" Ought I to be there, sir ? "

" Certainly. Every boy is supposed to support his House. We must try to teach you a little *esprit de corps.*"

The door banged behind him, and the ghost of a smile showed at the corners of the Sergeant's mouth.

" Better let me keep the pistol for the present, sir. He may come asking questions about it."

" Right-o, Sergeant ! Can I come to shoot sometimes ? "

" We shan't have to use the revolver again, but I can always fix you up with a miniature rifle. I'd rather you joined the Corps, though."

" Perhaps I may do, later on."

In the week that followed Jim played hard in the House and Club matches, and fully justified the good opinions he had earned in the Possibles match. His school work, too, showed great improvement, for Mr. Stewart liked him and, realising something of his difficulties, often looked into his study of an evening to coach him for an hour or so. But still his form master dropped on him whenever the chance offered.

With Blake and Holland and the other members

of the First Fifteen he was on the best of terms, but he formed no intimate friendships amongst his fellow schoolboys. The only really kindred spirit he found in all that new world was the grizzled old Sergeant, who for thirty years had soldiered north and south and east and west to the four corners of the earth. But the Sergeant himself never realised how much they had in common, for Jim was, by nature and early training, reserved concerning his own affairs, and never talked about his adventurous life in Africa.

Of the permission he had obtained to frequent the Armoury and use the miniature rifle range Jim took the fullest advantage. When Sergeant Jenkins discovered what an excellent knowledge the boy possessed of all weapons and how expert he was in repairing them, a fresh interest was added to Jim's lot at Brankstone, the Sergeant often allowing him to act as unofficial assistant armourer.

One afternoon when Jim had gone down to the Armoury, from which the Sergeant's little office opened, to do some repairs to one of the Corps' rifles, he could not help overhearing a conversation that was taking place. The Sergeant and his crony, the cricket professional, were smoking their pipes in the office, and Jim was working at a bench, within earshot but out of sight.

" You can take it from me, Tolody," the Sergeant

was saying, " it's no pleasure to me to serve under him. Old I may be, but that didn't prevent me from getting out to France before the ' Cease Fire ' sounded."

" I couldn't go myself," Tolody intervened. " I volunteered often enough, but no medical officer would pass me."

" Well *and* good, Tolody ; a man can't help his misfortunes ; but this here Mitchell was as fit as he could be, and yet he stayed on here to command the Corps, a job that any old dug-out could ha' done."

Jim laid down the file he was using and slipped quietly out of the Armoury. So Mitchell had not served in the War, and he was a shirker in the opinion of the Sergeant. That was news to Jim, and there was a broad smile on his face as he walked back to Sivart's. In his study he unlocked his trunk and rummaged among the contents. Presently he found that for which he was seeking, and his smile broadened.

The next day he gave in his name as a candidate for the Officers Training Corps. In view of his expert shooting the Sergeant quite expected that Jim would prove a quick recruit. As things turned out, however, he was slow at learning the infantry drill and the rifle manual. The Sergeant could not understand it, but it gave Mitchell, who held the rank of Captain, the chance of administer-

ing many a sharp rebuke ; nor was Jobson, as a Corporal, who sometimes took recruits' drill, slow in following his officer's example.

By the time the annual inspection came round, however, Jim was considered sufficiently trained to be granted his uniform and given his place in the ranks. Jim was mighty anxious about that inspection, but again that quiet smile moved his lips when he learned that General Braithwaite was to be the inspecting officer. At Captain Mitchell's preliminary inspection of the Corps there was nothing to distinguish Jim from any of his comrades, but just before the Company was called to attention to receive the inspecting officer, Jim's hand flew from his pocket to his left breast, and it might have been remarked that his movements were as precise as could have been wished for when the order was given :

" General Salute ! Present Arms ! "

The bugles rang out. Then came the order :

" Company, Slope Arms ! "

The ranks stood beautifully steady as the General, accompanied by Captain Mitchell and followed by his Staff, walked up and down the lines. As they reached No. 4 Platoon the master's eyes lit upon three medals which seemed to blaze on the left breast of Jim's tunic. The General caught sight of them at precisely the same instant.

"What's this mean, Captain Mitchell?" he rapped out. "If the boy's wearing his father's decorations they should be on his right breast. You ought to know that."

"I—I—," the master stammered.

"That will do, sir. I'll speak to the lad myself."

Jim looked straight to his front as the General stopped before him.

"The King's African, Victory, and Allies medals, eh?" exclaimed General Braithwaite. "Why are you wearing those medals, my boy?"

"For service in Jubaland and German East Africa, sir,"

"Regiment?" snapped the General.

"East African Mounted Rifles, sir."

The General looked at him more closely, then turned to his Brigade Major.

"Egad, Soames," he cried, "it's our little trumpeter, who was with us on the Lindi line! I'd like to speak to this boy after the inspection, Captain Mitchell."

As they moved away the master began a halting apology.

"I'm awfully sorry this should have occurred, sir. I can assure you that the boy shall be properly punished for his impertinence."

"You will do nothing of the sort. The lad upon several occasions carried my despatches under fire.

He is as fully entitled to wear his medals as are your two subalterns and your Sergeant-Instructor. I shall be glad if you will mark him down for early promotion. His father, by the way, was among the best of my scouts."

That night Jim was invited to dinner at the local hotel, at which the General and his Staff were staying. The old soldier knew of Captain Mitchell's war record, and was enormously tickled at the idea that one of the boys should have three medals which his master had not the right to wear. He had not, however, regarded it as a part of his duty to enlighten the master as to the number of young East Africans of twelve years of age and upwards who had seen service in the East African campaign against the German forces.

CHAPTER V

A VERY GREEN OLIVE BRANCH

After the inspection the school was divided into two camps, so far as Jim was concerned. The one faction, led by Holland and Blake, were honestly proud of having in their midst one who was probably the only schoolboy in all England who had actually fought in the Great War. This section included all the small boys, among whom the most marvellous tales were told of Jim's achievements, the most popular legend being that he had only just missed getting a V.C.

The other party, inspired by Jobson, and secretly encouraged by Mr. Mitchell, held that it was pure swank for Dawson to have displayed his medals. They would have been pleased to find that he had no right to wear them, but General Braithwaite's words had completely settled that question.

Things being as they were, Jim was, not unnaturally, surprised one evening, upon returning to his study, to find Jobson seated in the armchair, waiting for him.

" I'm sorry there's been so much bad feeling between us, Dawson," said Jobson. " I hope you'll shake hands and grant the favour I've come to ask."

" That's all right, Jobson ; we'll let bygones be bygones. What's your favour ? "

" We want you to represent Sivart's in the House boxing."

" But, my dear fellow, I'm no boxer."

" You're a fighter, Dawson, and that is more likely to carry you through to the final than any amount of ring-craft."

" I'll think about it," said Jim. " When do you want to know ? "

" The fights are next week. Could you let me know to-morrow ? "

" Yes. I'll have to see Holland first. The postponed Sledford match is only a fortnight off, and he may not want me to box."

Phil Blake was with Holland when Jim mentioned Jobson's request. It took both boys by surprise, and it was some time before either of them would give an opinion.

" What puzzles me," said Joe Holland, at last, " is why he has asked you to box for Sivart's at all. Boxing is just the one sport that your house is strong in, and you've never had the gloves on in the gym. since you came here, have you ? "

" No. The only scrap I've had at Brankstone

was a regular rough and tumble with Jobson himself soon after I arrived."

"It looks to me," said Blake, "as if he wants to land you in for the father and mother of hidings. It would be a safe method of getting his revenge. You're both Sivart's, and he wouldn't have to meet you in the House Fights."

"Oh, I don't know!" Jim answered. "He seemed awfully friendly this evening, and rather ashamed of our quarrel. I'd rather like to represent the house—if Holland doesn't mind. I'm not afraid of a hiding, for I've always been used to looking after myself in a rough house."

The others laughed.

"Box, by all means, if you want to," said Holland, "but a glove fight is a very different thing from what you call a rough house. Better get the Sergeant to give you some coaching."

Jim would have followed their excellent advice willingly, but Sergeant Jenkins was laid up with influenza, and so it was Jobson who undertook his instruction. Jenkins would have seen at once that Jim was a fighter by nature and training, which is a very different thing from being a boxer, and would have recommended the selection of another boy to represent Sivart's. Jobson, however, seemed satisfied with his pupil and encouraged Jim to fight rather than box.

Jim found that his mentor did not mind taking any amount of hard knocks and began to wonder if he had not rather misjudged him in the first place. One thing seemed certain, and that was Jobson's keenness that his house should do well.

The preliminary bouts were decided during the week, with local officials, and if they found something to smile at in Jim's scrambling "help yourself" sort of style, they made no comment, for he had little difficulty in disposing of his opponents in the eliminating trials and semi-finals.

For the final on Saturday evening a famous Army boxer was coming from Aldershot to act as referee. Jim was to meet Jock Buchanan in the Middle Weights, and Jock was a cool, canny Scotch youth, with a good deal of boxing experience to back his dour fighting spirit.

The school cheered the finals of the other fights enthusiastically, for Brankstone knew good boxing when they saw it, and that year the talent was exceptional; but the bout for which they waited was that between Jim and his more experienced opponent. Jock, in the five years he had been at Brankstone, had fought his way right up the weights, and had never yet been beaten; but then he had never before been called upon to meet such a peculiar opponent as he would face to-night.

Jim climbed through the ropes and went to his

corner, very calm and curiously uninterested in the whole proceedings. He had an absurd feeling that it was all very silly. He rather liked Buchanan, and there did not seem to be the slightest reason in the world why they should want to stand up and knock each other about before a whole crowd of gaping idiots.

"Seconds out—Time!"

Jim heard the bell and lounged across to the middle of the ring. There was a quick handshake, a moment of manœuvring, and then Jock sent a flush hit to the mouth that made Jim shake his head. But still he felt no anger as he feinted and dodged to avoid his opponent's following-up attack.

Twice he was penned in a corner and had to rouse himself and fight back to the open; but, somehow, this glove business hadn't the savour of the scrap with Jobson or of that tremendous broil he had got into at a Portuguese store-keeper's place down at Beira.

The bell brought a very tame first round to an end, and the referee's paper showed a long row of ticks to Buchanan's credit. The school sat and stared at Jim. He didn't seem to be so much of a fighter after all, and some of them began to think that he wasn't fond of taking punishment.

The second round started, and again it seemed

that Jim was determined to shirk the issue. Buchanan, very anxious that the prestige of the school should not be lowered in the eyes of the Army referee, whispered to Jim as they broke from a clinch :

" Don't funk—fight ! "

Jim answered with a savage attack that stirred the spectators in their seats, but the referee cried " Stop ! "

" You're hitting too low, Red," he cautioned Jim.

That made the boy more angry even than Buchanan's accusation of cowardice ; for all his fights, although admittedly rough, had always been scrupulously fair. He cut loose for the remaining half-minute, and the bell sounded for the end of a bustling round. Buchanan was still ahead on points, but Jim was building up a useful tale of ticks on the referee's paper.

Colonel Shannon turned to the time-keeper :

" That's a rum youngster wearing the red sash," he suggested.

" A new-comer," the master answered. " I don't believe he had ever had the gloves on until a week or so ago."

" He doesn't seem to know much about the noble art ; but, all the same, I think we shall see some pretty fair scrapping in the last round."

"Seconds out! Time!"

Jim jumped up briskly and set about his business straight away. He rushed his opponent to a corner, but was stopped with a terrific body blow; and, to every one's surprise, blood showed on the white of his singlet. Buchanan had got home on that long red scar which ran from Jim's ribs to his shoulder, and the old bullet wound had re-opened.

The pain for an instant was intense, and Jim saw red.

He rushed his opponent with whirling arms. When they got into a clinch he forgot all about the laws of boxing and threw his opponent heavily with a well-remembered wrestling trick. There was a gasp of horrified amazement from the spectators and a cry of "Stop! Stand back, Red!" from the referee.

Colonel Shannon called Jim over to him and explained the enormity of his offence. Jim's cheeks were blazing scarlet when the fight was resumed. He was very angry with every one and with himself most of all. He did not altogether understand this game he had been called upon to play and decided it would be best for him to remain upon the defensive. Buchanan believed that he had taken the sting out of his opponent's attack, and after a few cautious feelers sailed in merrily to settle the business.

Just before the bell went for the last time, Jim rallied in a half-hearted manner, misinterpreted a left lead intended to deceive him, and took a smashing right on the point of the jaw. That was the end of the fight, for Jim had been counted out and carried from the ring before he recovered. It was not, however, the end of the whole business, for Jim's first—and last—excursion into the realms of school boxing was to have very far-reaching effects.

The school, as a whole, was not pleased with Jim's performance, but Jobson grew more friendly than ever, while Holland and his friends treated the whole affair as a huge joke. But what Jim lost in the public estimation was more than made up for in another direction.

It has been said that the one kindred spirit he had found in the school up to that time was old Sergeant Jenkins. But now he was to make his first real friend amongst the boys. Jock Buchanan was not a joking sort ; in fact, he took life very seriously. He was slow, but determined, and as brave as a lion. He could take any amount of punishment without flinching, and like many another great boxer, he boxed rather from a sense of duty to his house and his school than because he enjoyed it. Others might laugh at or condemn Jim's exhibition, just as they thought fit, but Jock

wanted to know the rights and the wrongs of the case.

He couldn't understand why an apparently decent enough fellow should introduce a real gutter-snipe's wrestling trick into a school boxing bout, but he was pretty certain that there must be an explanation of the mystery ; and so, in his downright way, he went straight to Jim to ask for it.

Jim was feeling pretty sore at the time, but big Jock's broad, friendly grin was so entirely disarming that he opened up.

" I boxed to oblige Jobson, Buchanan," he volunteered, " and I'm very sorry that I made a fool of myself. Hope you'll believe that the last thing I intended was to do anything unfair."

" I believe that right enough, Dawson. But, man, what made you throw me ? "

Jim's smile broadened.

" We don't get many chances of boxing at home," he answered. " If you do happen to get into a scrap out our way it's usually with a pretty bad bunch of dagoes, who'd much rather knife you or gouge your eye out than fight you according to the rules of the game, and I guess I've got used to that sort of fighting. First the referee and then you yourself spoke to me, and then you fetched me one on an old wound. That hurt like sin, and I fancy that just for a moment I completely lost my head."

Jock gave his big, rumbling chuckle.

" Losh, Dawson man, but I'd rather box you than meet you in a rough and tumble," he laughed ; " that was a terrible hug and wrench you used to put me down."

" It won't happen again," Jim answered.

" I'm sure it won't," Jock agreed heartily.

And that was the beginning of a great friendship which was to remain with the two boys all through their lives.

CHAPTER VI

FLOREAT BRANKSTONIA

The Saturday of the Sledford match dawned dull, but fine, although there was a distinct threat of rain in the dark clouds which lowered overhead. Morning school dragged out its weary length with every one paying a good deal more attention to such glimpses of sky as might be caught through the windows than to the subjects their masters were striving to teach them. Mr. Mitchell raved through three long periods, Mr. Rice resigned himself to the inevitable, and Mr. Stewart frankly talked football to his classes. During the breaks the prospects of the match were eagerly discussed. In Hall, according to time-honoured custom, the team lunched alone, with the Reverend Alan at one end of the table and their Captain at the other.

Every master and boy, except such unfortunates as were in the infirmary, and nearly all the servants from the houses were ranged round Big Side when Joe Holland and the Sledford skipper led their

teams on to the ground. There were dozens upon dozens of cars in the background and a great number of people who had come up from Brankstone or over from Sledford and Chudham to witness the historic struggle between two of the finest Rugger schools in the country.

Outwardly the Reverend Alan was as cool as a cucumber, but in reality he felt like a cat on hot bricks as he stood inside the ropes chatting with the Headmaster and the referee. That feeling was no new one to him, for he had experienced it in the past before every one of his own five-and-twenty international matches. He knew that his boys were as fit as any man could make them, and that their plan of campaign had been worked out almost to the last movement.

"School! School!! SCHOOL!!!"

A tremendous cheer greeted the red shirts of Brankstone, but the cries of "Sledford" were hardly less deafening, for many old Sledfordians had travelled down from London to see the match.

The Reverend Alan thrilled as he watched the teams line up. Jock Buchanan had been brought into the side at the last moment to fill an unforeseen vacancy at full-back, Jim had been moved from centre threequarter to stand-off half, and a boy named Perowne had been promoted from the Colts to work the scrum. The forwards, led by

Joe Holland, were a sound lot, but there were some weak spots in the outside division. Mr. Stewart could only hope that Jim would be at his brightest and best and that Buchanan would play the dour Scots game. For Sledford were fielding their last year's team almost intact and among them numbered half-a-dozen colours who had been " capped " for either England or Scotland in the Schoolboy International at Richmond at Christmas.

The Sledford forwards over-ran the ball at the kick-off, and a scrum was formed at the centre of the field. There was a perfect wheeling movement, a quick break-up, and the black and amber jerseyed forwards broke through with the ball at their feet.

On they swept, straight for the Brankstone line, dribbling as only first-class forwards can do. It was a glorious rush. Boy after boy went down to the ball, but no one smothered it until Buchanan hurled himself at the feet of the on-rushing forwards. Two boys shot over him, another seized him by the jersey and strove to haul him off the ball, but he hung on until his own forwards were round him. Then he wormed his way clear.

The ball came out hard, and Perowne missed it. Jock gathered it as he ran, seemed to steady himself to kick, then changed his mind and swerved round the blind side. Jim, running as he had never

run before, tore round outside him and had reached the half-way line before Jock slung him a pass just as Jock was brought down.

Jim ran to the Sledford twenty-five, passed inside when he was tackled, and the ball travelled quickly right across the field. Young Lloyd took it, handed off a forward, and turned inside. A moment later he had hurled himself over the line.

Holland took the kick, converted the try from a difficult angle, and the Reds were five points up after less than ten minutes' play.

"That's luck," said Blake, as they walked back.

"I don't know," said Holland. "We've stung them a bit soon. Shouldn't wonder if they get their backs up now."

In that match no one gave or expected quarter. The scrums were tight and strenuous, with hard shoving and clean heeling. The halves were as nippy as one could wish for, and the tackling was as keen and scientific as it could be.

For five-and-twenty minutes play hovered in mid-field. Then a "three" found touch for Sledford in the corner, and some tight scrums, right on the line, followed. Blake got off-side, and Sledford were awarded a penalty. It was a lovely kick, but the ball fell into Buchanan's hands just short of the posts. The full-back found touch at the half-way line with a tremendous punt, and

Brankstone, who had been pretty well penned to their own twenty-five, began to press, forcing the opposing back to make a mark.

Jim fumbled the ball in fielding it, and the Sledford scrum-half broke right through. Again Jim, eager to retrieve his mistake, produced that marvellous burst of speed and diving full out brought down his man the barest of inches short of the line. Sledford, however, were not to be denied and just before half-time their captain dropped a goal.

There was only one point in it now, and Holland grinned at his men as they stood about sucking lemons, for they were too well coached to dream of sitting down on damp earth to let their muscles stiffen.

"Well done, chaps. Don't count on hanging on to a one point lead. We've got to score and keep on scoring this half," said Holland.

Play restarted, and Brankstone took the ball from the first line-out. A forward caught the ball high above his head and flung it back to Perowne. Naylor, left almost unmarked in the excitement of the moment, shouted a quick command, felt the ball bang against his ribs, as the scrum-half slung it to him, and then he cut clean through the centre with Jim racing beside him and the rest of the field streaming behind. He sensed a tackle coming from the left and transferred the ball to Jim. The

Sledford back, however, knew his job and dived straight for Jim's flying legs, bringing him down good and hard, but as Jim fell he flung the ball back to Naylor, who ran over the line between the posts. Again Holland converted and things began to look brighter for the home side. But now one of those unaccountable lapses occurred. For ten minutes the Brankstone team could do nothing right. In that period Sledford scored twice, and both tries were converted. The Sledford forwards, with their tails up, were establishing a mastery in the loose and shoving the Reds clean off the ball in the tight scrums.

"School! School!! SCHOOL!!!"

Eight mud-stained weary Reds heard the old familiar cry and stiffened to it. They put down their heads and shoved as they had never shoved before, but still Sledford continued to get the ball. At last their scrum-half made a superb effort. Quick as a ferret he snapped the ball up from his forwards' heels. Swerving, dodging, handing-off, he raced up the field.

Buchanan tore across to intercept him, and Jim, knowing his friend's lack of pace, dashed back to aid the last line of defence. The Sledford scrum-half was about all in, but found enough pace to side-step the back, and then Jim had him. It was a high tackle and sent both boys crashing into the

post, and no one could tell, until the referee pointed, whether the try had been saved or scored. There was a huge sigh of relief from the Brankstone spectators when they saw Buchanan pick up the ball and prepare to drop out.

Before the back could take his kick the whistle blew again, and then it was realised that Jim was lying very still and white beside the goal post.

As they carried him from the field his lips were moving, and the words he was trying to say were "Five points to win." That one thought blazed through the mists that clouded his brain, and presently those mists began to clear. He stumbled to his feet and saw that Sledford were fairly camped upon the Brankstone line. A few more minutes of such pressure and they were bound to score.

Stewart called sharply to Jim to sit down again, but his voice was drowned in the roar of welcome that greeted the reappearance of the Brankstone fly-half. For the first few minutes Jim was little more than a passenger.

"Five points!" The words seemed to blaze before his eyes in letters of fire. "Five points to win, four to draw!" Gone was all thought of playing on the defensive. Brankstone had got to win somehow. This was war, war as he had known it in East Africa, when no Briton would give back one foot before the Bosche.

Jim watched and waited for his opportunity, and at last it came. Again the Sledford scrum-half was streaking for the Brankstone line, and again old Jock was lumbering across to tackle him. He almost had him, but the wild pass the boy slung came straight into Jim's hands. He was perilously close to his own line and by every tenet of the game should have kicked to touch, but he realised that it could be only a matter of minutes before the whistle would go for " No Side," and, meanwhile, Brankstone were four points down.

What followed, the Reverend Alan said ever afterwards, was the greatest piece of Rugby play he had ever seen. For twenty yards Jim ran to the left, drawing the Sledford defence towards him. Just as they were closing in he piled on the pace and slipped by them, swerved right before they could turn and follow him, and raced up the centre of the field. Feet were thundering behind him now, a long continuous roar of encouragement rose from every side of the ground, and there was only the full-back to beat.

Jim knew that he was too nearly run out to risk a swerve or side-step, doubted if he had the strength left to manage a hard enough hand-off, and so punted gently ahead at the crucial moment. The back had dived for his hips, but Jim checked, hurdled over the falling boy, and caught the ball

as it bounced. An instant later he was under the cross-bar.

He managed to drag himself out of the way as Joe Holland took the kick, but his lungs and his head felt as if they were packed with fire and bursting, and he never saw the ball as it soared straight and true over the bar and between the uprights from the captain's boot. The next second came the double blast of the referee's whistle blowing for the winning goal and "No Side."

The only remark Jim made as the frantically cheering Brankstonians bore him shoulder high to the pavilion, was "I wish to goodness you chaps would stop making a fellow so beastly conspicuous." When Joe handed him his First Fifteen cap, instead of perching it upon his aching head he shoved it into his pocket with an embarrassed word of thanks.

But all the same Jock Buchanan noticed that he hung the much coveted cap on the corner of his father's portrait above the mantelpiece in his study, before they stretched their weary limbs to the fire and settled down to the tea which a worshipping fag had prepared for them.

CHAPTER VII

AN EVENTFUL HOLIDAY

One of the few things that had bothered Bob Dawson about sending his boy home to England was the question of how he was to fill in his holidays. Dr. Harvey would not have allowed Jim to spend his vacation in hotels, and the old hunter had no friends at home to whom Jim could go. It had seemed inevitable that Jim must undergo that most dreary of all ordeals of spending the long weeks between terms at the deserted school. In the end, however, his own character saved him.

The first week of the Easter holidays found him the guest of the Buchanans at their tiny place in the Scottish Highlands. Jim loved the environment. His hosts were simple folk and close kin to many an industrious family of Scottish settlers who had been his friends at home ; the scenery was like the Mau Hills hard by Nairobi, and half a hundred other stretches of wild country he had known and loved in Africa.

On the Laird's estate Jock introduced him to an

old gillie, who was blood-brother to his father, Selous, Fritz Schindler, and all the other "great hunters before the Lord." Jock listened spell-bound, as Jim and Sandy talked hunter's lore, and he smiled when the old man begged Jim to come back in the season that he might shoot a stag.

"The laird'll make ye more than welcome, rest assured o' that," the old gillie had said at parting, and Jim had promised to return if it could be managed.

The last two weeks of the holidays Jim was to spend at Blent on the Yorkshire moors, and Joe Holland had written to say that he hoped Jock would accompany him. When Mr. Buchanan heard of the invitation he laid aside his book and sat thinking for some moments.

"Of course you could wear my velvet jacket and the kilt o' the clan, Jock," he volunteered surprisingly. "That would be perfectly correct evening wear for a Highland gentleman. But I'm thinking that ye'd maybe feel a bit conspicuous."

Jock's face showed consternation.

"My sainted Aunt Sarah, I should just think I would!" he exploded.

"Then ye'd best away to Edinburgh, the pair o' ye, and find a tailor-man. Ye've both of ye got dinner jackets, but ye'll be needin' the tails and the wee bit white waistcoats, an' all the rest

o' the trimmings the modern young man must have ; for Blent is a great English hoose, and I'd no have ye disgracing me, Jock. Mr. Dawson, I make no doubt, would be feeling the same about Jim."

It happened, therefore, that Jim travelled South to Yorkshire encumbered with more luggage than he had ever in his life before possessed, for the Edinburgh tailor knew his business and saw to it that they were properly equipped for a visit to such an important English home as Blent. A big car met them at the station, and when they would have gone to see about their trunks the footman told them that all their effects would be brought on later by the luggage car.

Inside the big car, with a fur rug spread across their knees and a foot-warmer at their feet, the boys looked from the straight backs of the chauffeur and footman to each other's faces.

" I'm glad father thought of getting that tailor to fix us up properly, Jim," said Jock. " I've an idea this visit is going to be a bit of an ordeal. Had you any idea that Joe Holland's people were such important folk ? "

" Not the slightest, but then he's not the sort of chap who would be given to boasting."

Presently the car turned in through high lodge gates, each surmounted with a crouching lion, and swept up a long drive to a glorious old building

of grey stone. Blent is one of the show places of the North of England, and a Holland has held it since the days when Tostig and Hardrada sailed up the Humber to make war on Harold of England.

Joe met them at the door and led them into the hall where the house party was taking tea. Among the guests were a famous General, home from the Rhine, and an equally well-known prelate, two or three peers of the Realm, some politicians, and a number of younger scions of the nobility. One person the boys were delighted to find among their fellow guests was Mr. Stewart, their house-tutor from Brankstone.

Jim found himself presently talking to Lord Inniskilling, whose sons he had known well out in East Africa, and the old Irish nobleman's keen interest soon put him at his ease in his new environment. To one fellow, called Fineson-Short, Jim took a particular dislike. He was a financier of sorts, with an undisguised contempt for out-door sport, but a peculiar genius for billiards and card games.

"We'd suspect that chap of being an I.D.B. out home, Jock," said Jim upon one occasion.

"What the dickens is an 'I.D.B.'?" Jock queried.

"Illicit Diamond Buyer, of course. They're generally card-sharpers into the bargain."

" Steady, old horse ! Short's not a bad chap. He's given me some first-rate lessons in billiards."

" Then you take jolly good care you don't get playing with him for stakes that you can't afford," laughed Jim.

He spoke more in jest than in earnest and was surprised that his friend should flush crimson and turn away without a word.

During the next few days the house party was given something more than sport and pleasure-seeking to think about, for the long threatened General Strike was now an accomplished fact. Blent was in the middle of an industrial area, and Lord Larter's car had been pelted with stones as it had raced through Chappelle-le-Street, tramcars had been overturned in Leeds, one or two small country houses broken into, and there were no newspapers to tell the anxious house party what was happening elsewhere in England.

A long distance telephone call ordered the General to report to the War Office, and the politicians went hurrying back to Westminster. The next morning the official news sheet, which was produced by the Government after all the great daily papers had ceased publication through lack of workers, reached Blent, and the house party learned how England was fighting the General Strike.

" It seems to me," said Joe, " that we might get

some fun out of this show if we went into Leeds and offered our services as lorry drivers. I suppose you and Jim can both handle a car ? " he asked, turning to Jock.

" Can't answer for Jim, but I can push a 'bus along all right."

Jim looked up from the paper.

" Not my line of country, I'm afraid, Joe. I wonder if they'd have me in the Volunteer Mounted Police they're raising ? "

" They would, but they won't, Jim," Mr. Stewart chipped in. " I'm *in loco parentis*, so far as you are concerned. Come along out and pot some bunnies, if you're so keen on killing something."

Joe sought out his father, but met with an equally firm veto to his proposition ; and Jock, left to his own devices, drifted towards the billiard-room, where he found Fineson-Short practising fancy shots. The financier looked up as the door opened.

" Hullo, young fellow," he cried, " come along and save me from boring myself to death, I'll give you two-fifty in five hundred and play you for a quid, just to put some odd ' chink ' into your pocket."

" Right you are ! " grinned Jock, who rather fancied this a good opportunity to exploit the lessons his opponent had given him.

" By Jove, you have improved ! " said Short, when they had been playing for half-an-hour and his opponent was still ahead.

In the end, Jock, highly delighted with himself, ran out with an unexpected break of thirty to win by nearly a hundred points, and Short paid over the pound he had wagered with a good grace.

" Care to take the same points and play for a ' fiver ' ? " he asked. " Or would you prefer to do something else ? "

Jock trembled inwardly. His father had given him a five pound note before he came to Blent, and if he lost it he would have nothing left with which to tip the servants. On the other hand, could he very well refuse, after winning a sovereign, to give Short his revenge, especially as the other was again offering him two-fifty points start in five hundred up ? There wasn't much risk about it, anyway ; for, with that start, he was almost certain to win again.

" Just as you like," he said, after a further moment's hesitation. " But are you sure it's all right, you giving me so much start again, I mean ? "

" Right as rain, my son. I'm going to lick your head off this time," said Short, as he chalked his cue in a most businesslike manner.

But he did not lick Jock's head off, as he had threatened, nor even beat him. Five pounds was

a veritable fortune to Jock. Where another boy might have grown nervous, the risk he was taking only put a keener edge on his nerves, and he planned and played every stroke with the greatest care.

" You were evidently born under the sportsman's lucky star," said Short, as they put their cues away. " You ought to back your luck. Ever do anything with the gee-gees ? "

" No," Jock said. " I've heard that a fool and his money are soon parted at that game."

" That depends upon the sort of tips a man gets," said Short sagely. " I'm right in the know and make a pretty good income out of racing myself."

They strolled over to the window and saw Mr. Stewart and Jim trudging back through a downpour of rain with guns under their arms and pockets bulging. Jim looked up and grinned at Jock from under his dripping hat brim. But his face was serious a moment later as he turned to speak to Mr. Stewart.

" I don't like that financier-fellow, Padre. I wish to goodness that he'd leave Jock alone."

" So ho ! What's the trouble, my son ? "

" Well, I don't really know. It's more a feeling than anything tangible. I've known a good many birds of Fineson-Short's feather out in Africa, and I've never yet found one of them that could recog-

nise a straight line even if you shoved his nose on to it. They've usually got something to sell that glitters so much like gold that you jump at the chance of buying it, and then you jump a jolly sight harder when you've done so, because you realise just how badly you've been stung."

The master turned a speculative eye upon his pupil. This was a new and unsuspected side of the boy's character that he was seeing. Ignorant of the ways of English public school life Jim might be, but he was certainly no greenhorn in the affairs of the outside world. Mr. Stewart wondered afresh what sort of life Jim had really led out in Africa, but all he said was :

" You're a precocious infant, Jim."

" Not a bit of it, Padre. I'm an awful fool at most things, you know that ; only I know men. You see, I served with all sorts of chaps during the War, and you can't do that without getting to know which fellows are straight and which are the other sort. Besides, I've been hunting and transport-riding and trading with dad pretty well ever since I can remember, and, black or white, men are all the same ; either they're straight or they're not, and that's all there is to it."

The Reverend Alan turned that truism over in his mind as they were approaching the door of the gun-room. Jim's words had made him vaguely

uneasy, for he knew that Mr. Holland had agreed to invest a substantial sum of money in one of Fineson-Short's companies—not enough seriously to embarrass their host, it was true, but still a large sum that he would not care to lose. What is more, the master had almost made up his mind to put a part of his own small savings into the venture, but now he was quite determined not to do so.

"Why are you worried about Jock?" he asked, as he put his gun away.

"He's pretty keen on billiards, sir, and Fineson-Short has improved Jock's game about fifty per cent since we came here. They play together a good deal every day, and it would surprise me to learn that those games are played for love."

"You think they bet?"

"I'm certain of it. A chap like Fineson-Short couldn't forego the chance of easy money if you offered him double what he might win to do so. I know the breed, Padre, and I know also that old Jock simply cannot afford to lose. His people aren't any too well off."

After they had changed their muddy boots and washed their hands they joined the rest of the house party at lunch. Fineson-Short, at first, was loud in his praises of Jock's skill with a billiard cue, but as the meal progressed he lapsed into conversation with his host and one or two of the

older men upon financial matters. From time to time Jim caught their eyes turned in his direction and wondered what they could be saying about him.

By afternoon the weather had become even more vile, and no one seemed inclined to go out.

"What about a little flutter at 'Vanty'?" suggested Fineson-Short.

Mr. Holland looked up quickly.

"Bridge, up to a shilling a hundred, if you like," he said firmly, "but no other sort of gambling at Blent, if you please."

Short shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing at the moment. Later he confided to Jock:

"It's a pity our host wouldn't let us play. Every one staying here is well enough off to be able to afford anything he would be likely to lose, and we might have had some fun."

Cards, other than Bridge, having been vetoed, the young people of the house party adjourned to the billiard-room, where an outrageous game of Cork Pool was soon in progress, to the accompaniment of shouts of laughter. That evening Fineson-Short approached Jim with a new friendliness. He was a man quick to appreciate an atmosphere, and he had sensed the boy's dislike of him almost from their first meeting.

"I've been hearing a good deal about your

father's gold mine, Dawson," he began, with a pleasant smile. " How on earth did he come to make such a fortunate discovery ? "

In the ordinary course of events Jim would have given a non-committal answer and either changed or terminated the conversation ; but, as it happened both Mr. Holland and a man named Lief Bateson, whom Jim really liked, were within ear-shot. They added their request for information to Fineson-Short's question, and so Jim told the story of the killing of Karamanga and the finding of the Kilima Mali mine.

He told the story quietly, but well, and there was something more than the usual polite murmur of interest and thanks after he had finished the tale.

" That boy is ' the goods,' " said Bateson to his host, after Jim had bade them good-night. " I know the type well. The Dominions are simply full of youngsters of his quality. They have responsibility thrust upon them almost as soon as they can walk, they ' cut their wisdom teeth on danger,' as the old saying goes, and, consequently, they're men, in the matter of handling men, and particularly natives, by the time they're fifteen or sixteen years old. I've come across the breed time and again in Canada, Africa, and Australia. The funny thing is that no other nation seems to

produce them. Take South America; a British boy there is infernally adequate, but the young Latins are no use at all. It's the same in Portuguese East Africa and the French and German colonies. "I shouldn't be a bit surprised if young Dawson has seen active war service already."

"He has that," said the Reverend Alan, and told the tale of Jim's war medals and the discomfiture of his form master, to the accompaniment of a good deal of laughter.

"I'm not a bit surprised," commented Leif Bateson; "a boy like Jim Dawson can usually keep his own end up."

Bateson's opinion made a big impression upon the members of the house party who were present, since he was a mining engineer with a big reputation and had travelled at one time or another to all the four corners of the earth.

Upstairs, meanwhile, Jim was sitting on the side of Jock's bed, reading him a lecture.

"It's not exactly my pigeon, of course, Jock," he was saying, "but if I were you I'd go pretty slow on the billiards stake business with a chap like Fineson-Short. That sort of fellow usually plays a good deal above his apparent form when there's any money in the game."

"That's just where you're wrong," Jock protested. "Twice this morning, when you were out

with Stewart potting rabbits, Short gave me two-fifty in five hundred up, and each time I fairly walloped him."

"You did, eh? Were the stakes anything worth while? I take it you were not playing for love?"

"I jolly well took six quid off him, anyway," was Jock's triumphant rejoinder.

Jim shrugged his shoulders.

"It seems a lot of money to you, Jock; but I'll bet you Fineson-Short regards it as a good investment."

"Why?"

"I don't know. Does he think your people are well off?"

"He doesn't know anything about my people."

Jock spoke irritably, and Jim thought it wise to drop the subject. But as he was leaving he put his head round the door again.

"It's your own affair, Jock, old son, but keep clear of the 'double-or-quits' biznai if you do start losing," was his parting word of advice.

The next day one of the girls who was staying at Blent wanted to go into Leeds to do some shopping, and Fineson-Short offered to act as her escort.

Mr. Holland demurred at first, for there had been several instances of strikers stoning cars, and in one case the mob had actually overturned a vehicle and manhandled its occupants.

The girl, however, was very anxious to go, and at last he gave his consent.

Just before the car came round to the door Mr. Bateson and Jim strolled into the hall. Mr. Holland turned to them instantly.

" Miss Milthorpe is going into Leeds with Fineson-Short," he said ; " would you two care to go with them for the run ? "

Both saw the rather anxious expression upon their host's features and at once agreed. Before they left Mr. Holland drew Bateson aside.

" The girl would insist upon going," he whispered, " and Fineson-Short seemed anxious to accompany her. I don't think he'd be much use as an escort if there was any row. And the strikers have made trouble with several cars already, you know. I'd feel a bit more happy in my own mind if you and Jim don't mind going along with them."

" I'll go with pleasure," Bateson answered, " and if you'd said to young Dawson what you've said to me I fancy you'd have a job to keep him at home. Do you really think there will be trouble ? "

" No. But I'd rather be on the safe side, especially where one of my women guests is concerned."

" I think, perhaps, you're wise," said the mining engineer.

The drive into Leeds was entirely uneventful.

The roads were strangely free of traffic ; they passed only one or two cars and a food convoy of lorries. Here and there they saw groups of idle workpeople who stared sullenly after them as the big car flew by, and going through Houghton-le-Street they were booed and hooted, but no attempt was made to molest them.

Leeds itself had taken on a strange guise. The streets were as full as ever of people, but the impression of busy haste was absent ; there were very few vehicles on the roads, and a depleted tram service was being run by volunteer drivers and conductors.

Miss Milthorpe took a long time over her shopping, and then the party lunched at the Queen's Hotel. The orchestra was playing as usual, and it seemed to the party from Blent, as they laughed and made merry over their meal, as though the doors swinging to behind them had shut out any semblance of a world where such things as poverty and strikes and peril could play a part in the daily scheme of things. Bateson was anxious to start back for Blent soon after lunch, but Fineson Short insisted upon waiting for the reply to a telegram he had sent to London.

" But, my dear man, why not tell the hotel people to open it and telephone the contents to you at Blent ? " suggested the engineer.

" I want that wire before I leave Leeds," Fineson-Short answered.

His tone was so peremptory that no more could very well be said. It was tea-time before the expected telegram came, and then, to the surprise of his companions, the financier seemed just as much in a hurry to get back to Blent as he had been insistent upon delaying their departure earlier in the afternoon. At the garage where they had left the car the chauffeur touched his cap to Bateson.

" Beg pardon, sir," he said, " but I think we'd better go home round by Stormby. There was a nasty look about the people in Houghton-le-Street this morning, and a car's just come in that had all its windows broken as it came through there."

" Very well, Simpkins," said Bateson.

But again Fineson-Short was the dissenting factor.

" Going round by Stormby will take us nearly twenty miles out of our way," he said, " and I have some information which must be in Holland's possession before dinner-time. The matter is most urgent."

Bateson raised his eyebrows, but said nothing, and so they started off for Blent *via* Houghton-le-Street, which was purely and simply a mining village. Dusk had set in already, but it was not yet dark enough for the powerful head-lights to be of any particular use. The country looked very peaceful as they raced along, but Simpkins at the wheel was plainly anxious.

The problem the chauffeur was trying to solve

to his own satisfaction was whether he should take the long village street with a rush, or whether he ought to slow down in case there were any obstructions in the road. In the end it was the latter course which he adopted. They were again booed at and hooted, but not otherwise molested.

Simpkins heaved a sigh of relief as they cleared the last of the houses in the mining village. The car was already gathering speed under the pressure of his foot on the accelerator, when something loomed ahead, and he jammed on the brakes with all his might. A van was drawn up in the middle of the highway, and there was no room to pass on either side of it.

As the car came to a standstill a man stepped out from behind the van. He was dressed like a miner, and he carried a heavy Service pattern revolver in his hand.

" What is the meaning of this foolery ? " demanded Leif Bateson.

" 'Op out an' you'll learn quick enough, mate," the fellow answered in a gruff voice. " Come on ; step lively now, and 'old yer 'ands above yer 'eads."

As the people from Blent obeyed his harsh command, four other figures came slinking into sight. One man carried a cudgel, but the rest, apparently, were unarmed. All five were dressed in the rough clothes of miners.

" Now I'm goin' to run through yer," announced the leader, " an' remember this ; any monkey tricks an' this gun o' mine's liable to go off. See ? "

Fineson-Short's note-case, watch, and rings were transferred quickly to their captor's pockets. Miss Milthorpe's jewellery followed. Then the man was standing in front of Jim.

" Well, young shaver," he growled, " 'ave you got anything worth 'anding over ? "

As he stretched out his left hand to run through Jim's pockets the revolver wavered sideways for an instant. Jim saw his opportunity and acted upon it. His hands were above his head and useless. But he'd seen gun-men dealt with on more than one occasion in his adventurous life.

He leaned back as if to avoid the contamination of the man's touch, and at the same time kicked upwards with all his strength. There was a howl of pain as hard shoe-toe met tender elbow-joint, a flash and a report, as the revolver flew into the air, the man's finger pressing the trigger as he released his hold. But before Jim could regain his balance the man, whose arm he had nearly paralysed, was upon him.

The rest of the roughs rushed to their leader's aid, but Bateson, followed by the chauffeur and footman, leapt forward to meet them. Fineson-Short thrust Janet Milthorpe back into the car and

followed her, hastily closing the door behind him.

A battle royal was now raging, but Jim had no time to attend to any one's affairs but his own. He had caught a Tartar with a vengeance, and as they rolled over and over in the road he began to realise that he was fighting for his life. Twice he felt the man's thumbs sliding towards the sockets of his eyes and a shudder of horror ran through him; but each time, by a superhuman effort, he shifted his position, The man fought like a wild cat, biting, kicking, clawing and striking, and yet Jim managed to hold on.

But there was one man over. He held a stout cudgel in his hand and stood over the twisting, struggling combatants, awaiting his opportunity to settle Jim, but he dared not strike yet for fear of injuring his leader.

Janet Milthorpe saw what was happening and had slipped out of the car upon the far side before Fineson-Short could stop her. She had found the heavy bar of the car-jack, and it was a formidable weapon in the hands of such an athletic young sportswoman. In the shadow of the car she waited and then, as the man raised his cudgel to strike, she brought the bar down on the back of his head.

By this time Bateson and the footman had got

their men down, but the chauffeur was having a very rough journey, and Jim was almost played out. Suddenly the glare of fresh head-lights lit up the wild scene. There was a ringing shout and a quick patter of running feet as a couple of stalwart policemen dashed to the rescue. Simpkins's opponent made off as hard as his legs would carry him, and Jim held on to his man like grim death.

In a very few seconds the four roughs were handcuffed together, and Jim was thanking Janet for the timely aid she had given him.

" My word, Sergeant," said Bateson, as he dusted his clothes, " I never thought British working men would go to such lengths, even if they are on strike. Do you realise that this was a revolver hold-up ? "

" I can well believe it, sir," the Police Sergeant answered. " These fellows aren't British working men, on strike or otherwise. There's not one of them's ever done an honest day's work in his life. They're some of the Leeds racecourse gang, that's what they are. No doubt they dressed up like miners in the hope that the strikers would get the blame for their misdeeds."

" I see. Can we be of any help to you ? "

" If you wouldn't mind waiting while I send for another constable from Houghton-le-Street, sir."

" Certainly. It's lucky you came along when you did, Sergeant."

" You've the Strike to thank for that, sir," said the officer. " It's only in times like these that we have a motor patrol on the roads."

Presently the Blent party were allowed to resume their journey.

" Bravo, Jim," cried Leif Bateson, when they were at last alone. " Those fellows would have cleared us out and got clean away but for your pluck and promptitude."

" I think it's Janet who gets the prize," Jim answered. " I'd be nursing a broken head if she hadn't come to my rescue."

" Well, some one had to help you, you know, Jim," the girl said gently.

Fineson-Short gave vent to an embarrassed cough.

" My heart's so frightfully weak that I simply did not dare to take part in the struggle," he volunteered. " It's been an affliction for years, kept me out of the Service during the War and all that sort of thing, you know."

This piece of information was allowed to pass without comment. On the front seat the footman, who had served in India during the War and was now nursing a very badly bruised shin, had just remarked to the chauffeur that " that *soor* (soldier's Hindustani for " pig ") Short ought to be dragged through a hedge backwards for hiding himself behind a girl's petticoats when there was a fight on."

CHAPTER VIII

CALM AFTER STORM

THE footman was not the only person who viewed the financier's conduct with a good deal of disfavour. When the car reached Blent there was general consternation at Jim's battered appearance, nor was Leif Bateson without his honourable scars. Janet Milthorpe related their adventures, saying that, as an onlooker, she was the best qualified of any of them to do so.

"Onlooker be blowed!" Jim intervened. "I reckon you jolly well saved my life."

The girl, however, waved aside his interruption and continued her narrative. From time to time the eyes of her audience turned thoughtfully to the unmarked countenance of Fineson-Short.

"My word, sir," said Joe, when the story was finished, "you must be a pretty useful hand in a rough house. Why, I don't believe you've got even one bruise to show. What did you do with the other fellow—kill him early in the fight?"

"I—er—was not mixed up in the fracas,"

stammered the scarlet-cheeked financier. " I've got such a rotten heart——"

There was a moment of astounded silence. Then :

" You have my sincerest sympathy, Short," said the Reverend Alan drily.

The rest of the boys' stay at Blent passed uneventfully, but while it lasted Jim saw a good deal of Leif Bateson, and a strong friendship sprang up between them.

" I never write letters," said the mining engineer upon one occasion, " and I've nowhere in England I can ask you to come and stay, but you can generally get in touch with me, sooner or later, through the Wanderers' Club if you want to. But I'm a bird of passage, Jim. I might be off to the Amazon, the Antipodes or the Antarctic any day, but if I get to Africa I'll make it my business to see your father if I can. I've heard a whole lot about ' Hunter ' Dawson, of course, and now that I've met you I'm doubly anxious to make his acquaintance."

" He'll make you jolly welcome, you may be sure of that," the boy answered warmly.

There was one circumstance that continued to worry Jim a good deal. He had hoped that the obvious fact that Fineson-Short had shown the white feather in the affair at Houghton-le-Street would have turned his chum against the man.

But Jock, apparently, was content to accept the financier's explanation that he had a weak heart, and so they continued to play billiards together each day. But Jim was not bothered with any further overtures of friendship from Fineson-Short, nor did he, for his own part, issue any further warnings to Jock. The Scots boy was determined, evidently, to follow his own road at the moment, but Jim fancied that he would soon get over his folly when once he was away from the financier's influence.

At the end of the week the party broke up, but before Jock departed to Scotland he accepted an invitation to spend a couple of nights at Fineson-Short's flat in London on his way back to school. Of this plan the rest of the party were left in ignorance.

The Hollands pressed Jim to stay for the rest of the holidays at Blent ; but the Strike was now over, and he had arranged already to put in the last week, before returning to Brankstone, in a tramp through the Lake District with the Reverend Alan.

That walking tour was a revelation to Jim. All his experience of the varying face of Africa had shown him nothing like the scenery through which they tramped ; while the quiet evenings spent at humble country inns were almost as delightful as the African camp-fire nights shared with his father under the blazing Southern Cross.

The Padre proved himself a delightful companion. As they trudged along, or sat at ease in some old chimney-corner, he would draw his beloved Odyssey from his pocket and, slow-breathing, read over the great lines, translating as he went, until he made old Homer's heroes live again for Jim in all the glory and splendour of their vigorous, heedless manhood, so that the boy longed to master the classics in order that he, too, might enjoy them to the fullest extent.

At other times the Reverend Alan would speak of great men he had known in their riotous youth, and although he neither preached their virtues nor pointed a moral, he yet contrived to make plain to Jim the clean and kindly roads such men had followed to their great successes. Above all, he made the boy see that it does not pay to kick against constituted authority, no matter how unpleasant may be the form in which lawful discipline is administered or enforced.

Slowly, but surely, the master won Jim's confidence, heard strange stories of things that have happened, and are still happening, in the heart of uncivilised Central Africa, and, in secret, marvelled that a boy who had lived so spaciously should have settled down to English public school life even as well as Jim had done.

CHAPTER IX

THE WATERS OF AFFLICTION

DESPITE the pleasant holidays he had spent, Jim was glad to find himself back at Brankstone when the school reassembled. He was gradually growing used to the restrictions of life in England, which, at first, he had found so irksome. All that Mr. Stewart had said to him had sunk deeply in, and he was determined not to kick over the traces, no matter how unpleasant Mr. Mitchell, or any other master for that matter, might make himself. In this respect, however, matters were not to prove quite so simple as he had fondly believed that his own determination would make them.

During the holidays two important things had happened. One was that Mr. Mitchell had married, the other that another of the masters, named Jackson, had met with such a serious accident in the Alps that he would be unable to return to Brankstone. This left a house-mastership vacant, and the Head gave it to Mr. Mitchell.

It was Phil Blake, newly appointed head of

the school, who brought the news to Number Ten Study, which Jim now shared with Jock Buchanan.

" I'm glad I'm safely settled in Hooper's," Blake volunteered, " for I can't say that I should much fancy Mitchell for my house master. Have you chaps heard whom he's nominated as head of his house ? "

" Cummings will get it now that Stern's left, I suppose," suggested Jim.

" Not a bit of it," Blake answered. " Mitchell has chosen Jobson."

" And a jolly good riddance to us," said Buchanan heartily. " I never did love ' Bully ' Jobson."

" Oh, I don't know ! " interposed Jim. " He held out the giddy olive branch after our row, and he certainly did all he could to help me over that boxing biznai last term."

" You believe that, do you ? Well, I think he simply led you up the garden in the hope of getting you the sound licking he was afraid to try to give you. What do you say, Phil ? "

A broad grin spread across the head boy's features.

" Some ses one thing, an' some ses another "— he spoke in the broad Essex speech—" but there it be, an' I dursn't interfere wi' it."

" There's one thing about it, anyway," was

Jock's final opinion ; " we can't get worse than we're giving."

Later, when he strolled out with Jim to inspect the newcomers to Sivart's he was rather inclined to modify his views.

" Holy Snakes, Jim," he cried, as they walked across the quadrangle, " this is a bit too thick ! We've got two or three darkies in the house already, and now we get planted on us two big, black West African niggers. Hang it, man, the rest of the school will be calling us the Sons of Ham next ! "

But if the additions to their numbers caused discontent to the boys of Sivart's, it gave other people a certain amount of satisfaction. Mitchell's house, despite the fact that it was at feud with Sivart's, welcomed Jobson as its new head boy, and if he did not actually encourage the legends that were told about his old house, on the other hand he certainly did nothing to stop them from spreading, nor for that matter did the house master himself.

" Do you oil ? " became a customary question for a boy of Mitchell's house to ask a Sivart.

This was based on a story told by a boy whose father had told him that the natives of Africa prefer oiling their bodies to washing themselves. And one day when Jim was discovered in the pavilion rubbing his limbs with embrocation in preparation for a training run, even his best friends among the

seniors of other houses joined in the general shout of laughter.

From that day onwards the fun of baiting Sivart's became a popular pastime, and on the cricket field or down by the river any afternoon one might hear shouts of " Well hit, the Darkies ! " " Well oiled, sir," when a short run was brought off successfully, or " Well rowed, the Ethiopians ! " when Sivart's eight were rowing.

Apart from the incident of the embrocation, these taunts did not affect Jim directly, since he showed no aptitude for either cricket or rowing, but the other boys of Sivart's were furious, and he fully shared their views.

Brankstone is one of the few schools in England at which the sensible view is taken that athletic sports are a summer, and not a spring, recreation ; and, after half-term, boys there are allowed to train for the Sports as an alternative to cricket or rowing, and it was to his sports preparation that Jim was looking forward. Meanwhile there was nothing to do except to play the cricket he loathed and go bathing, which he liked, whenever he could manage to dodge " Field."

A finger, badly damaged while batting, although painful, proved a godsend, for the accident got him off cricket and allowed him unlimited time for swimming. But one afternoon, as he and Jock,

towels wrapped about their necks, were making their way towards the baths, Mitchell called them across to where he was taking " Call over " in front of the cricket pavilion.

" Ah, ha," said he, " so we prefer the lazy delights of the Pools of Heshbon to the more strenuous pursuit of scientific sport, eh ? But I'm afraid, Dawson, you must restrain your longings. The Powers-that-Be have decreed some much-needed repairs to the swimming bath, and it is not to be used for ten days."

He dismissed them with a wave of the hand and addressed himself to the list he held.

" Ten days ? Golly ! The Darkies 'll get a bit too dusky in that time."

It was one of Mitchell's boys who spoke, and the remark carried as Jim and Jock walked away, but the house master took no notice.

" I say, Jim," grinned Jobson, as they passed him, " *can* the Ethiopian change his skin ? "

Several other boys asked them the price of oil, and others besought them to wash for the honour of the house. Jock would have swung round on Jobson, and there would have been a first-class row, but Jim dropped a restraining hand on his friend's arm.

" Steady, old fellow," he said. " This wants thinking about."

" What can we do ? It's too sickening. Jobson burbles and piffles, and the other chaps follow his lead. They call us the Darkies already ; the whole school will be calling us Stinkers next ! "

" Let 'em. Our war's with Mitchell's. I must think."

They wandered on, right out into the open country, for generous bounds are allowed at Brankstone. Neither boy spoke, but Jim noticed that his chum seemed worried and distressed far more than the occasion warranted. It was not the first time he had noticed this since they had got back from the holidays. In fact his friend seemed miserable.

" Anything wrong, Jock ? " he asked quietly.

" Eh ? " exclaimed Jock, coming out of a brown study. " Wrong ? Oh, no, I'm all right ! Bit off colour, perhaps. Everything's all right otherwise."

The assurance was given quickly enough ; but, somehow, the answer lacked the ring of sincerity, and Jim was worried. Presently they found themselves near the big ponds by Felsham Woods, and Jim, seeking for a means of distracting his friend's thoughts from whatever it was that was worrying him, asked a question.

" Have you ever seen a fish caught by tickling, Jock ? "

" No, I've heard of it, but I've never seen it done. Have you ? "

" Watch ! "

Jim slipped off his blazer and rolled up his sleeve to the arm-pit. Then he knelt down by the bank and smeared arm, hand, and fingers with peculiarly dark clay. A long, low-hanging branch stretched far out over the water. As Jim crawled along it, it sagged under his weight until it was not a foot above the surface.

For a long time he lay stretched at full length and silent as a Red Indian, while his keen eyes searched the muddy depths beneath him. A ring broke the smoothness of the water after a while, and his right arm began to move very slowly. First the fingers slipped out of sight, and then, gradually, his whole arm was submerged.

Jock watched from the bank with keen anticipation. Five full minutes passed before there was a sudden swirl, and a silver carp shot flashing through the air to fall gasping and jumping almost at the watcher's feet.

" Bravo, Jim ! " he cried. " That's just about the neatest thing I've ever seen done."

" Chuck the poor little beggar back ! " Jim answered. " He's no use to us. It took me ages to master that bit of hunter's craft."

As he spoke he was busy rinsing the clay off his

arm. Presently a puzzled exclamation escaped his lips. Every vestige of clay had gone, but his arm and hand were left stained a deep purple.

"Good heavens!" cried Jock. "You'll never get that off, will you?"

"It'll wear off in time," said Jim, "but I don't fancy soap and water will shift it. I've seen that sort of clay before and ought to have recognised it."

When they got back to their study they found awaiting them half-a-dozen cakes of soap, two bottles of oil, and a tin of stain remover, which had been delivered, with exhortations to wash, by boys who had been present at that afternoon's cricket call over.

"Sweet, isn't it?" said Jock bitterly.

"Don't panic," advised Jim. "I fancy there's a rod in pickle for our 'well-wishers.'"

He tried to cover up the colour of his arm by wearing a glove, ostensibly to protect his damaged finger, but Mitchell spotted the purple patch between glove-wrist and shirt-cuff, became, thereupon, amazingly facetious, and in a few days the legend became firmly established that contact with Sivart's "aliens" caused a boy to change his colour. Several of the Sivart's fags were caught and carried off to other houses where they were examined *privatim et seriatim* for any signs of the "disease."

Mitchell's were the worst offenders. The rest of the school looked on and laughed, but Sivart's were furious. There were fights in plenty, at least two pitched battles, and more than one house meeting, from all of which Jim held disdainfully aloof. He knew what he knew, and he was biding his time.

In the meanwhile he was considerably bothered. In the first place Jock was evidently still worrying badly about something and was anything but a cheerful companion in consequence ; and, secondly, various small sums of money had been disappearing lately from Jim's box.

The climax came when Sivart's juniors raided Mitchell's, and Mitchell's retaliated with a massed attack on Sivart's house. Jim strolled up at the end of the battle, when the prefects of both houses had been summoned to sort out the combatants and sweep up the pieces. Presently a considerably ruffled Jobson emerged driving the tearful but unrepentant small fry of his own house before him. To him Jim, perched upon the railings in front of Sivart's, spoke pointedly.

" You'll have to wash the whole blessed lot of them yourself, Jobson. They might get leprosy or something from being in contact with us. Why don't you take them for a swim in Felsham Ponds ?"

" We are obliged for your suggestion, Dawson."

The voice of authority spoke from the doorway, where Mitchell and Sivart stood together.

" As there is a ' half ' this afternoon," Mitchell continued, " we will avail ourselves of your advice."

The light of an unholy joy showed for a minute in Jim's eyes, before his face set mask-like.

" I beg your pardon, sir," he said. " I didn't see you. I was only joking with Jobson.".

" Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, eh, Sivart ? " sneered Mitchell. " Well, well : my boys have been bothering me all the week for permission to bathe, but the river is not safe. The Ponds are certainly an excellent notion."

Later that afternoon the boys Mr. Mitchell had taken to bathe returned to their house in ones and twos by devious ways. For upwards of an hour they had disported themselves in Felsham Ponds. Some had waded in up to their necks, others, who had dived, had touched the mud bottom with their faces, but the purple stains had not appeared until they were drying upon the bank, and then they had dropped their towels and gazed with stupefied horror upon each other's empurpled faces or limbs.

Now they were hurrying back to their lavatories to wash away the horror with hot soap and water before any one should see it. But neither hot water, soap, nor even nail brushes—and some faces were scrubbed almost raw—would shift the stains, and

so the doors of Mitchell's house were jealously guarded by such boys as could hide their disfigurement with their clothing, and any earnest enquirers who presented themselves to know how the bathing parade had gone were ruthlessly chased away.

While one such pursuit was in full swing some one planted a small packing case of Matchless Cleanser in the hall, and Mitchell, dashing out of his study to ascertain the cause of the crash he had heard as it was dropped, pitched head over heels over the obstruction. Jock, who had helped Jim with the packing case, shook off his gloom for the remainder of that day, and both boys were almost dancing with excitement when they saw Mitchell come tearing across the quadrangle to interview their house master.

"It's all right," said Jim. "No one saw us take in the packing case, and I'll swear no one will find out how I got it. I've had it ready ever since the day after we tickled that carp out of Felsham Ponds."

Downstairs, Mitchell, almost stuttering with rage, was facing Sivart.

"There's no possible excuse, Sivart," he was saying. "Dawson must have known perfectly well what the effect would be of my boys bathing in Felsham Ponds. You have only to look at his right arm to satisfy yourself of that. I've seen

the purple mud-stains on his wrist for the last week."

"Did you make any remark about it?" inquired the house tutor from his arm-chair.

"I may have done, Stewart. I don't pretend to remember every little joke I may have with the boys in form."

"Your boys also said something to Dawson and Buchanan about the inability of the Ethiopian to change his skin, if I remember rightly. I was in the pavilion at the time," added the Reverend Alan.

Mr. Sivart took up the tale with a rush, for he had suffered a good deal at Mitchell's hands in Common Room since the latter had become a house master.

"I think we have to thank your house, too, for nick-naming us 'The Darkies.' Boys are touchy about such things, and a hint from you to your house would have stopped the trouble. It has not improved the feeling between the houses, you know."

"Do I understand, Sivart," exploded the angry master, "that my conduct is called into question by you and your house tutor? Upon my word, this is too much! I came here to make a perfectly legitimate complaint, and I find myself positively pilloried for a few perfectly innocent remarks made

in fun. Am I to understand that you do not propose taking any action in the matter ? "

" I'm sorry, Mitchell," said Mr. Sivart evenly, " but I cannot see that I am called upon to interfere. If the Headmaster cares to take up the affair that is quite another matter."

Mitchell turned and left the room, slamming the door behind him, and the house master dropped heavily into a chair.

" Bravo, Sivart ! " said the Padre. " His house has fallen into a pit of its own digging, and you were perfectly right in refusing to interfere."

" That's all very well, Stewart, but this boy Dawson must be a particularly ingenious young devil."

" He's led a pretty rough life in Africa and is well qualified to keep up his own end."

And the Padre spoke truth, for the next morning Mitchell received no fewer than half a hundred circulars advertising disinfectants, soaps, patent stain removers and bleaching powders. He was very nearly frothing at the mouth by the time he had finished opening his morning's mail, but he did not mention the matter in Common Room, nor did he take it up to the Headmaster.

CHAPTER X

WHO STOLE THE PRIZE FUND?

Jim came into the study, a pair of spiked shoes swinging from his hand, and found Jock Buchanan stretched at full length and half-asleep on the window-seat.

"Hi, you old frowster!" he shouted. "Aren't you going to do any training for the Sports? I hear that you very nearly won the Mile last year."

"Can't be bothered," Jock answered, with a yawn, and added, "Too many other things to think about."

Jim chucked his shoes into a corner and perched himself on the edge of the study table.

"What's the trouble, Jock?" he asked quietly. "It can't be work, because you haven't done any to speak of this term, and I don't think you're ill. Come on, can't you tell a fellow?"

For a moment the Scots boy hesitated, obviously on the edge of a confidence, then he seemed to change his mind.

" It's all right, really, Jim. Only I've got to raise a ' fiver ' by the end of the week."

Jim asked no question, as he opened his box and counted out five one-pound notes.

" If that's all your trouble it's pretty easily settled," said he, as he rolled the money into a ball and tossed it across the room.

Again Jock hesitated, but unfortunately could not bring himself to an open confession. Instead he asked rather shamefacedly :

" Won't it leave you frightfully short, lending me all this money, Jim ? "

" Not a bit of it, old son. If I run out I can cable my gov'nor, and he'll send me the needful by return wire."

Jock heaved a heartfelt sigh of relief and put the notes into his pocket.

Jim did not in the least mind lending his friend the money, but the incident left him rather troubled, for he could not forget all the small sums that had vanished from his box since he and Jock had shared a study together, and yet he could not bring himself to believe that old Jock would even " borrow " money surreptitiously. He refused to allow even his own mind to look upon his petty losses as thefts. He realised that his friend's people were not well off, but still it was only half-term as yet, and he could not understand why Jock should be

so unaccountably hard-up. Nor would he ask the question straight out since the other was evidently unwilling to make him his confidant.

On one thing, however, Jim was quite determined; that was that Jock should get into training and take part in the Sports. He had heard that Mitchell's house had set their hearts on winning the athletic championship; he was equally keen for Sivart's to achieve the honour, and he thought that Jock could help them to do so by carrying off the Mile.

A few days later the school met to elect the Sports officers and committee. At Brankstone it is the tradition that the boys shall themselves run all the games on their own resources, with the masters exercising no more than a watchful supervision.

Stephen Holmes, a fine young hurdler, who had won the Public Schools Championship in the spring, was elected athletic captain, and Jobson secretary. Jock, through the careful management of Jim, was appointed treasurer. It was not possible to arrange any matches with other schools, since most of these in England hold their sports in March or April, but a fixture was obtained with the famous London Athletic Club.

Jim, although not elected to the school committee, became athletic captain of Sivart's and got down to his job with characteristic thoroughness.

From London he obtained various books on athletic training and made the fullest use of the information they contained in the preparation of Sivart's young athletes.

"It's all very well you boosting me into this beastly treasurership, Jim," growled Jock, upon one occasion, "to say nothing of making me get into training for the Mile, but what events are you in for yourself? You seem to be a sort of Jack-of-all-trades at present."

"Haven't made up my mind yet, Jock, but I fancy it'll be the pole vault and the high jump."

"What about the hundred yards?"

"I might have a pop at that as well. Now let's have a look at that subscription list again."

The boys pored over Jock's figures for some minutes, and then Jim said:

"That's all right, we shall have plenty for the pots when the entry fees come in."

"I say," said Jock, after a moment's thought, "do you think Chief would let me go up to London to buy the prizes? We could get them a lot cheaper up there, you know."

His friend stared at him in blank amazement.

"Dear man, and what do you want to go to London for? Do I think you'd get leave? Do I jolly well not know that Harvey would knock you

into his waste-paper basket for unheard-of insolence if you even hinted such a thing to him ! "

The door opened, and Jim turned to find his fag waiting.

" If you please, Dawson," said young Randall, " you're to go to Mr. Sivart at once."

Jim left Buchanan collecting together the subscriptions they had been counting, and went down to his house master's study.

" Come in, Dawson," said Mr. Sivart. " I wanted to see you upon a personal matter. I believe that your father keeps you pretty liberally supplied with money. Do you carry much of it about with you ? "

" No, sir ; it is usually locked up in my box."

" Do you always keep the box locked ? "

" As a rule, sir ; but I've run myself rather short this term. Since there's so little there, I don't always bother to lock it up."

" I see. Are you short of funds because some of your money has been stolen ? "

" No, sir," Jim answered, truthfully enough, for the sums that he had missed were too small to make very much difference to him.

" I ask these questions," the house master went on, " because there has been rather an epidemic of petty pilfering in the school this term. But you will please treat what I have said as confidential.

By the way, Dawson, should you find yourself really short of funds you may apply to me for a pound or so."

"Thank you, sir," said Jim, and went back to his study in a very thoughtful frame of mind.

The reason he was hard up was that he had made a further loan to Jock, and his friend had that day asked him for another advance. What Jock wanted was another "fiver," and Jim knew that it was no good asking his house master to let him have such an amount as that.

He said nothing of his intention to Jock, but when he had got his school cap from the study he walked down to Brankstone town and despatched a cable to his father, asking him to cable him fifty pounds at once. He had a presentiment that the time was coming when a large amount of money might be badly needed.

As things turned out, Mr. Dawson had left the mine at Kilima Mali for a hunting trip into the wilds when Jim's cable arrived, and a month was to pass before it came into his hands. Meanwhile Jim, quite certain that he would receive a remittance by cable within a week, went back to school and handed over his last five pound note to his chum.

They saw a good deal of "Bully" Jobson in these days, since he was Sports secretary and Jock was treasurer, and at last Jock came to agree with

Jim that perhaps Jobson wasn't really such a bad sort after all. There was, however, one thing that neither of them could ever understand, and that was why young Randall always kept out of the way when the head of Mitchell's house was about, and seemed so terrified when he was in the room with him.

" Recollections of the days before you came, Jim, and Jobson was really ' Bully ' Jobson," suggested Jock. " He was an awful swine to the little kids before you took him in hand, you know."

" I suppose there's no possibility of his knocking young Randall about now, is there ? " queried Jim, blowing out his nostrils in a way that Jock had learned to recognise as a danger sign.

" Not likely. He knows better than to try bullying one of our fags," said Jock confidently.

" By the way, have you thought any more about that trip to London ? " asked Jim presently.

" Yes," answered Jock surprisingly. " I saw Chief about it, and I shouldn't be surprised if he lets me go. I showed him the catalogue I had from that London firm, and he saw fast enough what we shall save by buying the pots for the Sports in London instead of getting them locally. Said he'd think it over and let me know."

" I'll bet you any money you like he tells you to order them by post," was Jim's opinion.

In point of fact both Jim's predictions and Jock's hopes were wide of the mark. The next morning, which was a Friday, Mr. Mitchell saw Dr. Harvey and asked to be allowed to go to London the following week-end.

"My wife wants to see some relations who will arrive home from India in the middle of next week, sir," he said. "We should not leave Brankstone until after school on Saturday, and I should be back in time for Prayers on Monday morning."

"Splendid," said the Head, "but would you mind catching the early train on Saturday? If you could get to London before the shops close I should be greatly obliged if you would devote an hour to selecting the cups for the Sports. Buchanan has brought me the catalogue of a firm whose prices are much below those of our local silversmith."

"Certainly, sir; I shall be delighted."

"Then that is settled. Will you ask Buchanan to let you have the money he has collected by to-day week?"

"I'll send Jobson across to see Buchanan at once."

"By the way," said the Head, "have there been any more cases of theft in your house?"

"Not in the house, sir, but I missed some small change from my pocket a few days ago."

"Did you leave your coat anywhere?"

" The only time it was out of my sight that day was when I was washing my hands in the Common Room lavatory and while I was batting at the nets, when I left it in the pavilion."

" I'm very worried about the whole business," said Dr. Harvey, with a shake of the head. " That sort of thing isn't at all our form at Brankstone."

Jobson arrived at Number Ten Study just as its occupants were sitting down to a very plain tea.

" Sorry we can't offer you anything better, Jobson," said Jim, as he pulled up a chair hospitably, " but the fact is we're both on our beam ends until I get a long overdue remittance from home. It's been hung up for the best part of a month now."

" I can't stop, anyway," Jobson answered. " Mitchell sent me over about the prize funds."

" What have they got to do with him, anyway ? " Jock answered, bristling instantly.

" Keep your hair on, Buchanan. Chief's orders, as it happens. Mitchell's going up to London to-morrow week, and the Head has asked him to choose the prizes at some place that you discovered. He wants you to beat up the subs., and have them ready to hand over to Mitchell by to-day week."

" Can do ! " answered Jock, and Jobson took his departure.

After Randall and Perkins had cleared away

the tea Jim suggested that they should count the money in hand, so that they might know how much more they would need to collect during the next week.

Jock pulled out his box and a moment later gave vent to a cry of surprise at finding it unlocked.

"I'll swear I locked it before we went out, Jim," he said nervously.

"Never mind about that, you old ass," Jim answered. "Hurry up and look inside to make sure the money is safe."

There was a sinking feeling at the pit of Jock's stomach, as he raised the lid. Jim, looking over his shoulder, saw that the money had gone. For a moment blank panic seized the two boys, for there had been nearly forty pounds in the vanished canvas bag.

"It's no use drivelling that you must go to Chief and make a clean breast of it, Jock," Jim said shortly. "I didn't tell you before, but, as a matter of fact, I cabled my father nearly a month ago to send me fifty, mainly because I believe you're in some sort of trouble, and I thought you might need money. I suppose dad's away, or he would have cabled the cash before this. That forty pounds has got to be found and put back within the next seven days. If my cable comes in time I'll stump up; if it doesn't then you can begin to think about going

to Chief. Meantime we'll keep this matter to ourselves."

"But oughtn't we to do something about trying to catch the thief?"

"I think not," was the answer, given rather sadly.

"Jim, you're the whitest man I've ever known," said Jock, and held out his hand.

Jim took it without an instant's hesitation. You see, he was one of Kipling's "Thousandth Men," who would follow his pal "to the gallows foot and after."

"That's all right," said Jim, feeling thoroughly embarrassed, "and now I suppose we'd better get down to our 'prep.' Mitchell has set us a whale of a lot to do."

They got out their books and settled down, one on either side of the study table. But Jock, try as he might, could not concentrate his mind on his work. In the end Jim did it for him.

CHAPTER XI

A STAB IN THE BACK

THE next morning Jock received a letter by the first post, and as he read it turned green round the gills, as Jim remarked to himself. Also, it left him with no appetite for breakfast. Mitchell they found in his very vilest and most exasperating mood when they reached their form room. Nothing would please the master, and even the bright, particular lights of the Fifth, who were usually in favour, came in for their share of sarcasm, and were reduced to as near a state of nerves as any healthy boy is ever likely to get. The brunt of Mitchell's venom, as usual, was delivered to Jim's address, and then the master discovered the striking similarity of the work shown by the two boys of Number Ten Study. Jock tried to own up that Jim had helped him, but Mitchell would not hear of it.

"No, Buchanan," he said firmly, "I cannot allow you to be quixotic. I am convinced that Dawson is the criminal. Was he not below you in

the Half Term order? Is he ever above you in class? Has he surpassed you in any examination since he came here? The answer is in the negative —correct me if I am wrong. You do not deny it? Well and good! Out of your own mouth you are condemned, my Buchanan. Or, rather, Dawson is proved guilty by your silence. And you, Dawson!" He swung round with a fine show of fury. "You come here with your African airs and graces. You have assumed the direction of athletics in your house, I understand. You would have us believe that you are very jealous of the honour of that house, I suppose, and yet you are discovered as a common cheat, who cribs from a cleverer boy and is cowardly enough to allow that boy to try to shoulder the blame. Faugh! You disgust me, Dawson! You shake my faith in the inherent good of the human race! You are a cheat, sir! And a cheat, let me tell you, is no better than a thief!"

Jim was white to the lips, but he managed to keep his temper.

"Thieving is a matter for the Headmaster to deal with," he said quietly, but very distinctly. "Am I accused of that, sir?"

"No," said the master sullenly, and the rest of the lesson passed off in comparative peace.

"What a perfect pig he is!" said Hodgson, the head boy of the form, to Jim as they left the room.

" I find him merely boring," Jim answered, " for he always knuckles under if you give him enough rope and then tackle him."

Hodgson strolled off across the quad to School House, thinking that he had never met a calmer customer ; but, in reality, Jim's air of cool contempt was only assumed ; inwardly he was bubbling over with fury.

His rage had to find a vent somehow, and, as so often happens in athletics, his very anger improved his performances when he turned out to train that Saturday afternoon, and he was able to come back from the field well satisfied with a perfect pole vault of 10ft. 6ins., a height he had never achieved before. On that form he might make a good show in the forthcoming match against the L.A.C. and should be certain of winning the School Challenge Cup. He looked round for Jock to walk back with him, but his friend was not in sight, so he strolled on alone. Presently Jobson overtook him.

" Tell Buchanan I'm coming in after tea to go over the team for the L.A.C. match with him, will you, Dawson ? " he said. " He'll have to get the programmes printed and arrange for a bus to bring the London people from the station next Saturday. It ought to be a pretty good show, I think."

By the time Jim had tubbed and dressed, Jock had not come in, and so he had his tea alone. Presently Jobson arrived, and still Jock had not put in an appearance. Jim went to his friend's drawer and got out all the papers relating to the Sports.

" Look here, Jobson," he said, " you start sorting out what papers you'll want, and I'll go and hunt the blighter up. Very likely he's over at Hooper's with Holland or Blake. If Randall and young Perkins come in, send them round to the other houses to look for him."

Half-an-hour later he returned, but neither he nor the two fags had been able to find a trace of the missing boy.

" I suppose he's gone down to the town. It wants half an hour to lock-up yet," suggested Jobson. " I needn't wait, anyway. I've found all I wanted and have written down on this paper what is to be done about the programmes and the bus. Will you give it to him ? "

" Right-ho ! "

" Good night, Dawson."

" Good-night," Jim answered.

He sat down to re-arrange the papers before putting them back into Jock's drawer. And then, suddenly, his heart almost stopped beating as he read, before he realised that he was doing so, a

letter he felt perfectly sure Jock had never intended any one else to see :

> " DEAR BUCHANAN," it ran—" I quite realise that you have, up to the present, kept your promise of settling the debt you owe me by payments of five pounds a month ; but there is thirty pounds still due, and unless you bring that amount to me at the above address by to-morrow, Saturday, evening, I shall inform your Head-master of your gambling transactions. You may argue that a debt of honour is in question, and that such debts are not enforceable at law, but I think I have the means of making you pay, and I hope you will have the sense to realise that I mean to do so."

It was signed " M. Fineson-Short."

" So that's it, is it ? " said Jim between his teeth. " And of course the poor simple idiot has gone hareing off to London to plead for mercy."

Another thought struck him, and his jaw set in a grim line. Good heavens ! Perhaps poor old Jock, driven to desperation, had pinched the prize fund and had taken it to London with him to pay this rotten little card-sharping thief ! If that was the case, Jock must, obviously, be stopped from handing the money over, because the cable from Africa might not come in time for the missing

forty pounds to be replaced by the following Friday.

Jim routed through his drawer and found a time-table. Jock, he imagined, had caught the 6.15 p.m. up; there was another train to London at ten o'clock, and a fast train down just after midnight. That would be the earliest Jock could catch back in any case.

Jim thanked their lucky stars that they had been promoted from Number Three Dormitory to a bedroom of their own. Jock had counted upon that, naturally, and would be relying upon him to let him in. But he ought to have told him. That part of the affair would be all right, of course; but he didn't know what to do about the money. If only he could be sure that the cable from Africa would come in time—but then he couldn't be sure of that. He knew his father's ways. A man of his temperament would soon get tired of messing about on a mine, and he felt pretty certain that the reason his father had not answered his cable was because he was somewhere "out in the blue," as the African saying goes, enjoying as a holiday the hunter's life he loved.

Jim had almost made up his mind to risk the money coming in time to save Jock, for he knew that the one immutable rule at Brankstone was that any boy breaking out of his house at night

was expelled, no matter what excuse he might have to offer. And that was a prospect that Jim did not relish ; besides, he had his duty to his father to consider.

That last consideration would have settled the matter ; but he realised suddenly that Jobson must have seen Short's letter to Jock, when he was going through the Sports papers, and Jobson was head of Mitchell's House and a monitor. The question was, what would he do ? Jim thought at first that he would go and see him, but then he remembered little Randall's frightened face when Jobson was present, and a good deal of his old dislike for the monitor returned.

A knock fell upon the door, and Mr. Sivart came in.

" Mr. Mitchell has sent over for Buchanan—something to do with the Sports, I believe—do you know where he is, Dawson ? "

Jim did not love lies, but now he lied good and hard for the sake of his friend.

" I think he's gone to bed, sir. He hasn't seemed particularly fit to-day."

" Dear me ! Do you think the matron ought to see him ? "

" Oh, no, sir ! It was just a slight headache, I fancy."

" Very well, Dawson. I'll tell Mr. Mitchell that

he has gone to bed. You won't disturb him when you turn in ? "

" Hang ! " said Jim, as the door closed behind his house master, for he liked Mr. Sivart and hated being forced to deceive him.

He was pretty sure now that Jobson had told Mitchell of his suspicions, and he decided to wait another half-hour to see what the Fifth Form master would do when he heard from Sivart that Buchanan was in bed. Mitchell could not demand to have a boy's room searched in another man's house, without giving the house master a good and sufficient reason for preferring such an unusual request. On the other hand, Mitchell could not state his reason without giving away the fact that Jobson had been mean enough to read another boy's private letter while he was a guest in that boy's study. That Mitchell would believe the story that Buchanan was in bed Jim did not for one moment imagine. He rather fancied that the master would do as he himself had done : that is to say, look up the trains to and from London. If he did that he would see that Jock could not get back before the midnight train and would, no doubt, set a watch on Sivart's to catch the boy as he returned.

Jim thought of his chum, and he thought of the kindly old people with whom he had stayed in the

Highlands. Jock had got to be warned of his danger somehow, and if he, Jim, was going to Brankstone station to meet him, he might just as well go to London and try to save the prize fund, which he was afraid Jock had taken with him.

When once this decision was arrived at, he made his plans and preparations quickly, and as the school clock was chiming the quarter after nine he slipped out of his bedroom window, pulled the sash down after him, and shinned down the rain-water pipe, his features hidden by a villainous old wide-brimmed hat he had brought from Africa, and his coat collar turned well up round his chin.

Bright stars were shining in a velvet sky as Jim stole through the shrubbery, and he thanked his luck that Short had not chosen the season of the full moon for Jock to go to London. As he left the school grounds behind his spirits rose rapidly. The mystery and silence of the open fields and sleeping woodlands thrilled him and awakened memories of other glorious nights spent out on the African plains, and, to make the illusion seem more real, he caught, from time to time, sounds of movement, soft blowings and the crisp sound of crunched grass, as he passed by grazing cattle.

Now, as in the old African days, he guided himself by the stars across country, for he had no intention

of risking a meeting with one of his masters on the Brankstone road. Now and again he glanced back, or paused to note a landmark he might need to guide them on the return journey. This he did by frontiersman's instinct rather than of any set purpose.

As he came down the hill towards Brankstone town he saw the lights of the train approaching the station and broke into a run. He did not go near the booking office, but popped over the fence and into the last carriage. When the ticket collector appeared Jim paid from a station some miles further away than the one he had travelled from, for he was taking no risk of being traced to a one-horse show like Brankstone, from which place no other passenger might have travelled by that train.

CHAPTER XII

NO MERCY

Fineson-Short, resplendent in a flowered Paisley silk dressing-gown over evening clothes, lay back in a huge arm-chair and allowed the smoke of a scented cigarette to trickle in two thin streams from his nostrils. His eyes were half-closed, and there was a sneering smile upon his lips. Jock, perched miserably upon the extreme edge of another big chair, stared hopelessly at his tormentor.

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Short," he was saying, "but it is impossible for me to find this thirty pounds. I may, with a bit of luck, be able to scrape together another 'fiver,' but that is the best that I can hope to do at present. If you'll let the matter stand over I'll get a job of some sort in the holidays and pay you every penny. Surely it can't matter to you if you have to wait a month or two longer."

Fineson-Short settled himself still more comfortably in his deep chair, but he did not answer at once. He was thoroughly enjoying himself.

"What I don't like about you, Buchanan,"

he said at last, " is the way you foist yourself on to decent, monied people and play billiards—with me, for example—for stakes you can't afford. You make no demur about taking my money, when you win, but the moment you start losing you begin to squeal. To be brief, you play and cannot pay, and then you come whining to me for mercy. Had I known that your people were paupers, that young Holland had invited you to Blent out of charity, I should certainly not have wasted my time on you."

Poor Jock missed the naïve admission made by his persecutor and swallowed the gross insults.

" When I played billiards with you at Blent, Mr. Short, I had the money to pay with, if I had lost," he answered manfully. " It was that card party you took me to when I stayed here on my way back to school that got me into all this trouble."

" Did you imagine that people in Society play *vingt-et-un* with counters at a penny a dozen ? " sneered Short. " Hang it, Buchanan, I was your host, and I paid your losses for you when you told me that they were heavier than you could meet ! "

" And haven't I paid you back as much as I could possibly scrape together ? " answered the boy, desperately.

Short raised his eyebrows, as he flicked the ash from his cigarette.

" I should have thought your father could have found thirty pounds to save his son from exposure and disgrace. What is he, a labourer of some kind ? "

The boy's fists clenched, and his eyes blazed.

" I'd have you know my father is a Highland gentleman and of a family as ancient as the Hollands or any of you. I tell you I'll not have him worried with this dirty business."

" I don't see how you'll prevent it," Short drawled. " I fancy your Headmaster will inform him fast enough, after he's heard from me."

Jock had half risen to his feet ; now he sank back into his chair, the picture of forlorn dejection.

" Mr. Short, I beseech you——"

Thus far he got with his final appeal, when a loud knock fell upon the front door. The sound of a brief altercation in the hall followed ; then the door of Fineson-Short's room was flung open, and they saw Jim standing in the doorway, with the face of an angry manservant showing over his shoulder. He turned, pushed the man back, pulled to the door, and snapped the key in the lock.

" I thought I should find you here, Jock. You left this beauty's letter lying about," he said, with

a contemptuous nod towards Short, who had quickly abandoned his lazy pose.

" What do you mean by forcing your way into my house in this boorish manner, my young friend ? " demanded Short.

" Forget it," snapped Jim rudely, " and not quite so much of the ' young friend ' stuff either. Where I come from we don't make friends of card-sharpers —or cowards ! "

" How dare you ! I'll have you thrown into the street ! "

" I thought you might be getting that sort of notion into your head. That's why I locked the door."

Fineson-Short sprang to his feet, but Jim pushed him back into his chair with the heel of his open hand.

" Don't you start anything with me," he advised ; " we're brought up on ' rough-housing ' in my part of the world."

And Short, who, from the safe interior of the car, had watched Jim play his part in the scrap with the hold-up gang on the Houghton-le-Street road, was constrained to reconsider his hasty intentions.

" That's better," smiled Jim, as the financier lit a fresh cigarette with a trembling hand. " And now let's get to business."

Jock looked at his school chum in amazement, for he did not know this new Jim, who had gone back to his African beginnings and was once more the keen young dealer who had carried through successfully more than one piece of business on his father's behalf.

"It's no good, Jim; he won't give me time to pay. He's going to see Chief."

"See nothing!" said Jim. "Have you paid the animal any money?"

"Ten pounds of my own, and those three fivers you lent me."

"And he wants yet another thirty pounds?"

"Yes."

Jim whistled.

"How on earth did you lose so much?"

"At cards—a game called *vingt-et-un*."

"Look here, Dawson, I don't see what all this has got to do with you," broke in Fineson-Short.

"You don't? Well, I'll tell you. You have heard of the Kilima Mali gold mines in East Africa, and you know that that is my father's show. I'll give you my word to discharge Buchanan's debt to you as soon as ever I can get the money over. Will that satisfy you?"

"Will you give me that promise in writing?"

Jim thought a moment.

" I suppose you hold Buchanan's I.O.U., or some sort of promise to pay ? "

" Yes."

" Produce it then, and I'll give you my own I.O.U. in exchange."

" What about interest ? "

Jim walked leisurely across the room. There was a nasty, purposeful look in his eye, and his clenched fists hung loosely.

" The only interest you'll get is a fine fat ear, Mr. Fineson-Short," he said.

The financier made haste to exchange I.O.U.'s with Jim, for whom he knew himself to be no physical match. In addition, he was well satisfied with the turn things had taken, for he had but small expectation of getting thirty pounds from Jock and had never really intended to take the matter to Dr. Harvey.

" Don't try any funny business when we've gone," said Jim, from the door, " or I'll come back."

In the hall he picked up his battered old hat, then stood surveying his friend, who had perched his school cap on the back of his head.

" Well, of all the blithering old asses ! Here, catch hold of one of Short's *chapeaux* and shove your cap in your pocket."

Jim marched back into the sitting-room and planked five shillings down on the table.

" We're taking one of your hats," he said, and left the financier gaping after him.

. . . . . .

Dawn was breaking when Fineson-Short finally got into bed, but already he had begun to mature a plan for the discomfiture of Jim Dawson and the enlargement of his own bank balance.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WRONG MAN ARRESTED

The night was very dark, but fine, as the boys slipped out of the train at Brankstone station. As they trudged across the fields Jim hummed a tune, for he was supremely happy in the realisation that his chum had not, after all, purloined the prize fund. That it had vanished and would have to be replaced if the cable from Africa came in time was undeniable, but that did not worry Jim, now that his confidence in his pal was restored. Not for all the world would he have let Jock know that he had ever suspected him of the theft.

He began to go over in his mind the names of the people who had known where the prize fund was kept. There were Jock and himself, Jobson, and Randall and Perkins, the two study fags, and possibly the room-maid and Smithson, the school odd-job man, who cleaned the windows and saw to the fires. It was all very puzzling. Neither Jobson nor the servants would have had much

chance of getting at Jock's box, and he did not think that either of the fags would dare to steal so large a sum of money.

Once again young Randall's frightened little face rose before his eyes, and he asked himself if it was possible that Jobson, for some ulterior motive of his own, had bullied the kid into taking the money. It would have been so very easy for either Randall or Perkins to commit the theft.

The more he thought about it, the more uneasy he became. Suppose Jobson had got the money and the cable did not arrive in time from Africa, Jock would be " for it " all right ; and even he himself might come under suspicion, for Jock would fight, and fight mighty hard, to save his own honour. He might even convince Chief that he had not taken the money, and a lot of people would believe him, for he had a reputation for downright honesty at Brankstone, had old Jock, and in that case the next most likely person to come under suspicion would be Jim himself. With that idea firmly fixed in his head, he made up his mind to send a further cable to his father on the morrow.

As they were approaching the school Jim dropped a detaining hand upon his companion's shoulder.

" I didn't tell you earlier, Jock, because I didn't want you to worry about it, but I rather fancy that

Jobson read that letter you left behind, and I'm pretty certain that the beast went and peached to Mitchell."

"Oh!" groaned Jock. "That means that we shall be nabbed for certain, and you know that Chief always expels for breaking out of house at night."

"I do know. That's just exactly why we must not be caught. As I see things, Mitchell will make this show a sort of personal private 'scalp.' He's probably hanging about now with the intention of bagging you himself. I fancy he'll be waiting under our window; therefore he's got to be lured away. I'll do that part, because I'm more used to night work than you are. When I've got him on the run after me, you shin up the rain-water pipe like greased lightning and lie doggo until I arrive."

"But supposing he catches you, Jim?"

"I'll swear he shan't do that. He shall have a good run for his money, and then I'll just drop him and come home."

"I don't like it," grumbled Jock. "I've been the cause of all this trouble, and I reckon that I ought to be the decoy until you get to safety."

"Go on, you blundering old idiot! If you started running about in the dark you'd make enough noise to wake the dead, and we'd have the whole school out of bed before either of us could get in."

They were very near to the school now, and suddenly Jim's quick eyes caught a tiny glow that might have come from the shielded bowl of a pipe. He located the watcher as being under the wall of Sivart's, and he smiled.

"It's not me for the frontal attack," he whispered to Jock; "he's there all right. I vote we go round by School House and come up to Sivart's along the other side of the Quad. Half a minute, though. I just want to make sure that it *is* Mitchell."

Jock turned to answer, but Jim had already vanished, gliding silent as a wraith towards the dark outline of the buildings. For a while he lay quite still, stomach flat to earth. Then a faint, familiar cough, a peculiar affectation of Mitchell's, brought a smile to his lips, and he wormed his way back to where Jock was waiting in the darkness.

"It's Mitchell all right," he breathed. "Come on, and be mighty careful how you plant your fairy feet. And, for heaven's sake, don't slip as you go up the pipe."

Jock crept on, trying his best to imitate the silent footfalls of his comrade. But his heart was hammering out a mad rat-a-plan against his ribs all the time. Suddenly it almost stopped beating. They were passing School House, and Jim had clutched his arm in a close, compelling grip.

" What is it, Jim ? " he breathed.

" Over there, window of Chief's study, a light showed for an instant ! "

They waited in breathless silence.

" Perhaps you imagined it," whispered Jock at last.

" Not on your life ! My own has depended upon the quickness of my eyes too often for me to be mistaken. Stay where you are. I'm going to investigate."

" What's the use, Jim ? "

But Jock spoke to the night, for Jim had faded out as quickly as before.

Below the window the boy paused, listening intently. Muffled sounds of movement and occasionally a sharp click came to his ears. Some one was busy in the Doctor's study—that was certain. But he could not understand why he could hear that person's movements so plainly.

Inch by inch he raised his head, until it was above the level of the sill, and then he discovered that the window was open. He felt the short hairs rising crisply at the back of his neck. It was horribly eerie alone there in the night, with some unknown person busy, doing he knew not what, within a few feet of him.

Presently the mystery of the light he had seen was solved. A white beam lit up the front of the

Doctor's safe, and the light flung back from the surface of the metal showed Jim the masked face of the man who was working away at the lock by the aid of an electric torch. The boy's first thought was that he must instantly raise an alarm. Then he remembered the circumstances in which he had made this startling discovery and that his chum was close at hand waiting for him in the darkness.

He might summon Jock to his aid, so that they could tackle the burglar together ; but Jock was a heavy-fisted, heavy-footed old oaf. He would be bound to kick up such a din as would rouse the School House and bring Mitchell running over from his post outside Sivart's.

In the end Jim decided that this was essentially a one-man show. His nerves were steady now, but he was conscious of such a fierce excitement as he had never felt since he had come home from Africa. Slowly and very cautiously he began to weave his body in over the window sill. He was breathing evenly and silently through his nose, and presently his hands rested upon the thick pile of the Turkey carpet. Little by little he lowered his body and drew in his legs after him.

A glance assured him that the burglar's faculties were still concentrated upon the forcing of the safe. With infinite patience he rose slowly to his feet, and began to steal silently across the room. He

had in mind an old Nandi trick, and he prayed to the Powers-that-Be that it would work all right. Everything depended upon that.

An age seemed to pass before he was behind his unconscious victim. Suddenly two sinewy hands shot out, and the burglar found himself struggling in a grip that was rapidly choking him into silence.

The man struggled desperately, but Jim's relentless hands held fast, and his punishing knee ground ever harder into the small of the burglar's back. As he felt the struggling figure weaken, Jim shifted his grip, both thumbs pressed cruelly behind the man's ears in a special spot the Nandi hunter had taught the boy to find, and presently he lowered a limp body to the floor.

"And now let's have a look at you, my beauty," muttered Jim between labouring breaths.

He picked up the torch that had fallen from the man's hand, and pulled off his mask.

"Smithson! Now we know who pinched the prize fund from poor old Jock's box."

Quickly and scientifically Jim bound the servant's wrists, elbows, and ankles with the cords of the curtains. He did not gag him, for he knew that he would not dare to call out when he recovered consciousness. As he was about to leave the room his foot struck against a bag, and again the torch

was brought into use. That valise contained the clothing and personal belongings the servant had evidently intended taking away with him. And it held also a small canvas bag that clinked musically when Jim lifted it up. And thus the prize fund was recovered.

" Jim, what are you doing ? "

The anxious whisper came in through the window.

" Lie down on the ground, you fool, and warn me if Mitchell heaves in sight ! I'll be out in a minute."

At the thought of the master waiting and watching outside Sivart's a delightful prospect opened up before Jim's mind. With Jock outside to keep " *Cave* " he was prepared to take a risk. He crossed to the Headmaster's desk, and lifted the telephone receiver from its hook.

" Exchange ? " he queried, after a minute's wait. " Put me through to the Police Station quickly. It's urgent."

Another wait that seemed like an eternity.

" Is that the Police Station ? Brankstone School House speaking. We've caught a burglar here in the Doctor's study. Do you hear me ? Yes, a burglar ! I daren't speak louder, there's an accomplice out in the grounds. Over by Mr. Sivart's house, I believe. You'll catch him, too, if you

hurry up. What's that? Oh, yes, we've got the one in the Doctor's study tied up securely enough!"

A minute later Jim dropped into the flower bed beside his friend.

"Let's get out of this while the going's still good," he whispered. "The fireworks will start presently. And he accused me of being dishonest himself! I'll be sick if I once start laughing. Get on, Jock. We'll make for the bushes opposite to our window."

"But what about getting in?"

"We'll have to wait a bit, but it will be all right later on."

The school clock chimed out another quarter as they lay in hiding; then they caught the soft crunch of gravel under heavy feet.

"Mitchell's on the move, I believe," whispered Jock. "Perhaps he's fed up and is clearing off."

"Wait, wait!"

Jim was a-twitter with excitement. The master too had caught the tell-tale sound of the crunching gravel, and suddenly he moved out from the shadow of the house. Instantly two burly forms hurled themselves upon him. Mitchell, in a panic, hit out right and left. One of the constables drew his truncheon and clubbed him without a second's hesitation.

"We've got one, Inspector," announced the constable in a low voice.

"Pop the darbies on him and bring him along then, Jones."

"Very good, sir."

The half-stunned, wholly bewildered master was half-led, half-dragged, off round the corner of Sivart's by the three policemen, as they made their way towards School House.

"Up that rain-water pipe like lightning," ordered Jim.

A minute later the boys were in their bedroom and tearing off their clothes.

"It was Smithson, the odd job man," explained Jim. "He was burgling Chief's safe, and I outed him. Then I telephoned the Police Station and told them there was another 'burglar' in the grounds. That's why they clubbed Mitchell. Wasn't it perfectly marvellous? He called me dishonest himself, and now he's got himself pinched for attempted burglary. Jock, this is too ter-rific to tell the other fellows!"

"Smithson," said Jock, whose brain never worked quickly. "Smithson, a burglar, eh? Then perhaps he pinched the prize fund!"

"He did, my jolly old Socrates, he did, and here it is. It was part of the swag he was bunking with."

"My aunt! What a night!" exclaimed Jock, as he put the bag of money under his pillow.

"I'd give best part of that money to see what's going on in Chief's study," said Jim. "I wonder how Mitchell will explain what he was doing in the grounds at this hour of the morning! Better rub over those boots of ours and shove them out of sight before you get into bed, Jock, just in case we are called up to account for our doings."

But no knock of authority fell upon their bedroom door, and in a few minutes both boys were sound asleep.

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT HAPPENED AT SCHOOL HOUSE

Outside School House an extraordinary scene was taking place, and the police were frankly puzzled, since everything was silent and no light showed in any window. Matters were further complicated when Mr. Mitchell began vehemently to protest his identity.

The Inspector surveyed his prisoner by the light of an electric bull's-eye. He saw before him a tatterdemalion figure with a dirty face. The man was wearing an old sports coat and had a dark muffler round his neck. He was not at all like the officer's conception of a schoolmaster, and yet the man spoke like a gentleman.

"You may be what you say you are," he said doubtfully. "Anyway, we can soon get at the rights and wrongs of your case by waking up Dr. Harvey."

"I assure you that everything is all right, Inspector," urged Mitchell. "There is not the

slightest need to disturb the Headmaster. Come over to my house, like a good fellow, and my wife will identify me."

" If you're one of the Brankstone masters there'll be no harm in asking Dr. Harvey to identify you," said the Inspector obstinately. " Besides, I want to know who telephoned for us."

The house master raised his manacled hands in a gesture of resignation, and the Inspector turned to the front door bell. Failing to arouse the sleeping household by that means, he turned his attention to the knocker. A few minutes later a head appeared at an upstairs window.

" Who's there ? " enquired a deep voice.

" Is that Dr. Harvey ? "

" Yes. What do you want ? "

" It's Inspector Walsh, Brankstone Police Station, speaking. I'd be obliged if you'd come down, sir."

The Headmaster hurriedly drew on his trousers and dressing-gown ; and then the group in the quadrangle heard the rattle of chains as the front door was unfastened.

" Come in, Inspector. I hope that you are not the bearer of any bad news."

" Thank you, sir," said the Inspector, removing his cap. Then he turned to the constables who stood on either side of their prisoner, whom the

Doctor did not recognise. "Don't you let that fellow get away," he warned them.

"Now, Inspector?"

"Well, sir, it's like this. About three-quarters of an hour ago we got a telephone call telling us that you'd caught a burglar in your study and that he'd got an accomplice on the look-out by Mr. Sivart's house. We came up as fast as our bicycles would bring us, and, sure enough, we nabbed the look-out just exactly where we had been told we should find him. He gave a good deal of trouble, and, in the end, one of my men had to take his truncheon to him. He's a most villainous-looking cove, sir, but he swears that he's one of your masters."

"One of my masters? Preposterous!"

"Well, that's what he says, sir. Anyway, you can see him for yourself in a minute. Meanwhile, what I want to know is what about this other fellow that you captured in your study? The person who telephoned said that you'd got the burglar securely tied up."

"Really, Inspector, all this is most disturbing. I certainly did not telephone, and I do not see who else can have done so."

"Suppose we have a look at the study, sir?" suggested the practical police officer.

Dr. Harvey switched on more lights and led the way along a corridor. At the door of the study he

paused a moment, listening. Then he flung the door open and turned on the electric light.

The sight that greeted them brought an exclamation of surprise to his lips. A man, securely bound, was stretched upon the carpet ; close to him was an open Gladstone bag, a number of burglars' tools littered the floor, and the lock of the school safe had been almost cut out.

" Seems to be something in it, after all," remarked the Inspector drily, and stepped forward. " Do you know this fellow, sir ? " he queried, as he turned the bound man's face towards the light.

" My goodness, it's Smithson ! "

" Ah, and who may he be ? "

" He applied for a post as odd job man at the beginning of term, and I appointed him. His references were excellent."

" They'd be forged, sir. We know this fellow well as ' Buster ' Joe. It's an old ' lay ' of his, getting a job as a house servant and then making off with the valuables. He's pretty high up in the criminal classes among the ' cracksmen.' And now, sir, if you don't mind, we'll have his pal in. I like his sauce, trying to kid me he was a schoolmaster. I suppose he thought he could get away with it, because he speaks like a gentleman."

Inspector Walsh went back to the front door and spoke to his men.

" Bring that fellow along to the Doctor's study. This way," he ordered, and added, " Howett, you'll want your handcuffs ; the other chap is here, tied up, just as we were told."

Dr. Harvey, who had seated himself at his desk, looked up as the procession entered. Then he sprang to his feet as he caught sight of the prisoner's pale and woebegone countenance and saw a smear of blood at the temple.

" I'm afraid you've made a terrible mistake, Inspector. This is, indeed, Mr. Mitchell, one of my most respected house masters."

" Good heavens ! Who'd ha' thought it ? "

For a moment the Inspector was taken completely aback. Then he whipped round on Mitchell.

" I'm not satisfied yet, sir," he said sharply. " I'd like to have the true explanation of what you were doing hanging about the grounds at the hour of the night when we took you. I should have thought your proper place would have been in bed."

For a long moment he received no answer, and Dr. Harvey began to look puzzled at his house master's obvious hesitation. But Mitchell found himself caught upon the horns of a dilemma. If he told the truth the Headmaster would very quickly want to know why he had not been informed that there was cause to believe that one of the boys had broken

out of his house. Nor would it excuse his own palpable neglect of a bounden duty if they went to Buchanan's room and found that the boy was really absent. Dr. Harvey would hold that he had been forewarned of the boy's intention and should have seen to it that proper steps were taken to prevent him from leaving the school. He cudgelled his brains for a plausible excuse, but could find none, and finally offered a very lame explanation.

"I am a light sleeper," he stammered. "I thought I heard footsteps, and so I came down to investigate. Then the policemen sprang upon me. I mistook them for burglars and struck out, then one of them hit me, and I fancy I must have lost consciousness for a moment. Indeed, my head is none too clear even now."

He raised his hands, from which the handcuffs had been hastily removed, to his aching temples and sat down by Dr. Harvey's desk.

"But surely, Mr. Mitchell, you would have been wiser to give the alarm, or at any rate to have sought aid."

"I wish to goodness that I had!" said Mitchell wearily.

"Well, well, we'll say no more about it. Perhaps you had better get back to bed. I'm sure the Inspector does not wish to detain you any longer."

The master dragged himself to the door. Just as he was closing it Dr. Harvey called him back.

" By the way, was it you who telephoned to the police ? "

" No, sir, I did not telephone.

" Very good. Good-night, Mr. Mitchell."

" Good-night, sir."

The Inspector had already despatched his men to the station with the genuine burglar ; now he seated himself opposite to the Headmaster.

" This is a most mysterious affair, sir. Have you any idea who did telephone ? "

" None whatever. Would you yourself recognise the voice again ? "

" No, sir. Whoever it was that spoke did so in a whisper ; because, as he said, he was afraid that the man outside would hear him."

" Hum ! " grunted the Doctor, who was something of an amateur yachtsman in his leisure. " Your informant might well have been a sailor. Those knots with which Smithson's bonds were fastened were perfect masterpieces."

Inspector Walsh asked leave to use the telephone and put through an enquiry. Presently he turned to the Head.

" That call came through from here all right," he announced.

After that they took leave of one another, more mystified than ever.

The next morning the whole school were agog with the news of the burglary.

" It's a pity we can't tell them what happened to Mitchell," said Jock.

" There's no need to tell them," Jim answered, with a grin. " His part in the ' 'orrible affair ' is bound to come out when Smithson is brought up for trial. I'm just longing to see him in class on Monday. I fancy he'll lie doggo to-day. Don't forget our ' ploy.' The obvious inference, when the other chaps start wondering about his battered appearance, is that he's been out on the binge and jolly well deserves all that he's got."

" Can do," chuckled Jock, fully restored to his usually happy state by the recovery of the prize fund and his release from the persecutions of Fineson-Short.

On Monday, Jim and Jock enjoyed themselves to the full in Mitchell's form, and in the afternoon the long-expected remittance arrived from Africa. A money order for thirty pounds was sent off to Fineson-Short at once, and two days later Jim received his I.O.U. As Jim tore it into little pieces Jock tried to stutter his thanks.

" Shut up," said Jim. " What's the good of having a pal if you can't help him out of a hole

when he's in one? Besides, just think of the gorgeous time we had! Talk about poetic justice! Didn't Mitchell say I'd cribbed and that cribbing was as bad as thieving, and then he goes and gets arrested as a burglar? If you ask me what I think, I can only tell you that I think it is too perfectly ter-rific even to laugh over."

"Jim, you're a marvel," said the admiring Jock.

CHAPTER XV

FOR THE HONOUR OF SIVART'S

It was a Saturday evening, and the Reverend Alan lay back in one comfortable arm-chair in Study Number Ten ; Jock occupied the other, and Jim was perched on the window ledge, carefully cleaning the spikes of his athletic shoes.

" You're pretty keen about athletics, aren't you, Jim ? "

" Rather, Padre."

" I wonder why ? Most English boys prefer the team games."

" Don't you believe it, Padre—and, anyway, I'm British, not English, if you mean ' English of the Island '—most chaps like winning, or scoring, on their own. Rugger's all right, but cricket is so beastly slow, too much sitting and standing about with nothing to do but watch. It's a good thing for a fellow to have to think and act for himself sometimes."

" Our Solomon delivers judgment," chuckled Stewart.

"Don't pull my leg, Padre. Why shouldn't we have athletics as an alternative summer sport? Besides, you can play for your house or your school just as well in athletics as you can at cricket."

"Mitchell's say they are going to beat us for the House Championship at the Sports, by that same token."

"Why us more than any of the other houses, sir?" interposed Jock.

"They've cherished a feud against Sivart's since they bathed in Felsham Ponds, I fancy. What are you laughing at, you young scoundrel?" He turned to Jim.

"I was thinking how they nicknamed us the Ethiopians and the Darkies, Padre."

"And so you sent them to bathe in the Waters of Affliction?"

"Jolly well I did, Padre, and they came back with their faces blackened."

"It's my opinion that you were born to be hanged, Jim."

"Maybe I was, Padre, but meanwhile I've adopted the motto of your native land."

"Eh? How do you mean?" queried the Reverend Alan incautiously.

"'*Nemo me impune lacessit*,'" quoted Jim. "And that, according to my translation, means

that you can't sit down on thistles without being made uncomfortable."

"*Touche*," acknowledged the master with a chuckle. "But all the same I wish you'd turn your ingenuity to something constructive."

"How do you mean, sir?"

"Well, Sivart's, for example. As a house we've rather had our tails down since the rest of the school took to calling us the Ethiopians. You two have a good deal of influence; you've proved that by the way you've built up the athletic team. I expect you'll both be monitors next term. Why not take an interest in the house as a whole?"

"Dare to be a Jobson!" hummed Jim, deliberately misquoting the hymn.

"Well, and why not?" asked the Reverend Alan quietly. "After all, Jobson has raised Mitchell's right up out of the ruck, and Sivart's gained more honours than they hold now when he was in the house."

On that note he left them, but what he had said sank in, and later, when Jim saw two of Sivart's "Darkies" strolling across the Quad., he stopped them.

"What do you fellows do with your spare time?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know, just moon about mostly!" answered the elder of the two boys, both of whom hailed from the West Indies.

"Why don't you play cricket?"

"Well, we just don't, that's all."

"But that's absurd. All the natives of your parts play cricket. You jolly well turn up at 'Nets,' or there'll be trouble."

And since Jim was now a "House Option" his orders were obeyed, and Sivart's found a bowler and a batsman whose prowess they had never suspected.

There were other ways, too, in which the boys of Number Ten Study began to take an interest in their house; but for the moment their attention was centred mainly in the forthcoming athletic match with the London Athletic Club, and the School Sports which would be held a week later.

Jim had had a lot of trouble with Jock about his training for the Mile, since the obstinate Scot did not, at first, take kindly to the new-fangled methods recommended in the text books that Jim had purchased. Every one of his objections had, however, been overcome by his chum, and the eve of the school match with the L.A.C. found him fitter and faster than he had ever been before.

That match was of the relay order and worked on a special handicap principle, whereby the boys had the inside station in all the distance events, while their opponents ran outside a line which caused them to travel a certain number of yards further

in each lap. Despite the advantage of a somewhat generous handicap the school lost by the odd event in nine. But that, as Jim pointed out to his disheartened friend, meant little or nothing, because the school team had been too jolly nervous to do themselves justice.

" But, mind you, Jock," he added, " we've all got to buck up before next Saturday, or else Sivart's aren't going to win the House Championship. Sivart himself is keen enough about it, and the Padre's worked like a perfect Trojan."

" That's all very well," Jock agreed grudgingly, " but what we want is a lead from the head of the house."

" Carson's a clever little swot," said Jim thoughtfully. " He doesn't go in for sport himself."

The head boy was as Jim had described him. A brilliantly clever boy, who had reached the Sixth Form very young, he regarded games as a waste of valuable time and left the house very much to itself, while he devoted himself to his studies. His house master had promoted him to office against Mr. Stewart's advice ; and, in consequence, the house, lacking patriotic control, had grown absurdly slack. For instance, Jim was pretty certain that Carson had not been present at the match that afternoon, although Sivart's had a good number of boys in the Brankstone team, and a

number of others in Sivart's had followed the head boy's lead.

Jim was still turning these things over in his mind as he knocked at the door of Carson's study.

"I say, Carson," he said, when he had received permission to enter, "'*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*'? Why weren't you at the match this afternoon?"

"I—I was working," stammered the head boy.

"You always are; and meanwhile I suppose the house can go to the dogs as it pleases?"

"Here, I say, Dawson, what do you mean?"

Jim stared at the table littered with scientific instruments and volumes on higher mathematics.

"Hasn't it struck you that, being head of the house, you ought to make some sort of pretence of taking an interest in it?"

"I beg your pardon, Dawson, but are you head of the house or am I?"

"You're supposed to be, but the rest of us think you've hidden your light under a bushel quite long enough. We want you to lend a hand to help to buck the chaps up for the Sports next Saturday."

"I've got my work to do," Carson answered; "if Mr. Sivart is not satisfied with the way I run the house he'll tell me so. It's no affair of yours; in fact, you're a jolly sight too cheeky, Dawson.

If I choose to hide my light under a bushel, as you put it, that's my own affair and no one else's."

"I'm not so sure about that. You're head of the house, you know."

"Then you jolly well remember it. And now get out, I'm busy."

Jim went with a shrug of the shoulders. In the hall his eyes lit upon the hose-reel, covered with a biggish canvas bag.

"Light under a bushel, eh?" he murmured, and there was a smile on his lips and a twinkle in his eyes as he went from study to study gathering unto himself allies.

Half an hour later Carson's door burst suddenly open, and in the same instant the lights were switched off. He felt himself seized, and a hand was clapped over his mouth. Then he was bundled into a canvas bag, just big enough to hold him, and the sides were laced loosely together.

"Switch on the light," said a familiar voice. "We've got to arrange the 'bushel.' Better lie still, Carson de-ah, or you don't know what may tumble on you."

Above him they piled every article of furniture in the room that would not be heavy enough to hold him down. On the top of the topmost chair of the pile they perched a pair of flower vases filled with water. They explained to him exactly what

they were doing, and then they left him with an exhortation to lie very still and consider the honour and welfare of the house; then he heard their laughter fading away.

For perhaps half an hour he lay quite still, and then the growing agonies of cramp forced him to stretch his skinny legs. Mr. Sivart, in his study immediately beneath the one occupied by Carson, heard the crash and came tearing up the stairs to ascertain what had caused the disturbance.

For a moment he stood in the doorway gaping at the litter of furniture, scattered books, and smashed vases and ornaments. Then he turned his attention to the green canvas hose-cover that jerked and wriggled spasmodically in the midst of the mess.

"Carson, where are you?" he demanded, as he turned towards the closed door leading into the head boy's bedroom. "Carson"—more sharply—"there's an animal of some sort tied up in a bag in your study. Come and release it at once."

A half-choked explosion of laughter reached his ears. His face flushed an angry red, and his foot tapped the floor impatiently.

"Do you hear me, sir? Carson, I say, where are you? Come out at once.

"I can't, sir."

The answer was muffled and miserable. Mr. Sivart glared in amazement at the writhing sack.

" Carson ! ! ! "

The exclamation conveyed both surprise and displeasure, and the sack wriggled yet more violently. The master produced a knife from his pocket and cut the cords. The unhappy head boy slouched to his feet and offered sheepish thanks.

" What, may I ask, is the meaning of this outrage ? " demanded the house master.

" I don't know, sir, honestly I don't. Dawson told me I ought to take more interest in the honour of the house, and I told him to mind his own business. Then, later on, the lights went out suddenly, and the next thing I knew I was inside that beastly bag with all the furniture piled on top of me. I really don't see what it all means, sir ! "

Outside his work Carson's brain did not move quickly, but Mr. Sivart saw, and his mouth was twitching.

" Never mind, Carson," he said, " perhaps it won't happen again, especially if you—ah—take a little more interest in the doings of your school fellows."

The next time the Reverend Alan visited Number Ten Study his sides were shaking as he sank into the chair Jim dragged forward.

" When I—um—suggested that you two should take a greater interest in the welfare of your house," he said, " I was not advocating anything quite so

drastic as the methods of the—ah—um—Russian *cheka*."

"Our sort of 'interest' is apt to spread a bit, Padre," grinned Jim.

"I knew it. I knew it. There is a marked improvement in—ah—certain quarters."

"Then that *was* what you were after, sir?" queried Jim.

"You know too much, my young friend, and, as I have remarked before, you were born to be hanged. Are you fellows training this afternoon?"

"Rather, Padre. Just hang on a shake, sir, while we get our shoes. I'm going to time Jock over a mile, and I want you to give me a tip or two about my high jumping."

"Very well, then get a move on. It's too good an afternoon to frowst indoors."

CHAPTER XVI

A TRIUMPH FOR SIVART'S

Sports Day at Brankstone was a great event. Dr. Harvey held definite views on the social value of the affair, and so parents and friends, old boys and other spectators, rolled up in streams. The ground was gay with marquees and flags, and there was a holiday atmosphere about the whole proceedings, such as only the Old Boys Cricket Match, held a month earlier, might rival.

The boys from Sivart's House were on the ground early, and it might have been remarked that they were far more warmly clad than any of their schoolfellows, and that they took infinitely more trouble over the preliminary preparations for each event. This was because Jim was "going by the book," from which he had learned the importance of forethought and proper preparation. He paid, indeed, so much attention to the needs of Sivart's team that he seriously impaired his own chances in the earlier events.

The hundred yards was the first race to be

decided, and, to every one's surprise, Stephen Holmes finished first, beating Jim by the barest inches. The Shot Put followed, and Holland beat Buchanan by a comfortable margin. Then came the hurdles, and again Jim had to acknowledge Holmes the better man.

Mr. Stewart caught Jim by the arm as he was walking back to the pavilion.

"Stop fussing after the other fellows and take a rest now, Dawson," he advised. "You've simply got to win the quarter mile."

Mitchell's had already won the steeplechase and long jump, School House the hundred yards and hurdles, and Hooper's the Shot Put, but Sivart's had got three second places and were hopeful that Jock Buchanan would win the mile and Jim prove good enough to beat Jobson in the high jump and pole vault. The question was, could he capture the 440 yards, which was the last event on the programme? He would be taking part in two tiring events before that was reached, whereas Holmes would turn out for the last race fully refreshed by a long rest.

Jim sat down beside the Padre to see the mile race run. Jock looked as cool as a cucumber as he walked to the starting place, after trotting a lap to limber up; but Hodgson, his second string, was

obviously nervous. Phil Blake, too, seemed rather fidgety.

" I'd feel happier if Jock was a bit more excited, Padre," remarked Jim.

" He's a dour old stick, but tremendously determined," answered the Reverend Alan. " I expect he'll be all right, once the race settles down."

" I'm so afraid that he'll be left at the start," said Jim. " You can see that Blake is all on edge to be off. Now for it ! "

The boys were crouched on their marks and the starter, a thoroughly experienced official, who had come down from London to perform his duties, did not keep them waiting. There was a brief word of warning, a flash and a sharp report, and they were off.

Blake, in the inside station, made the running, until Hodgson, from the outside berth, shot across the track to take the lead, while Jock, clearly outpaced in the short sprint for position, tried, but without success, to find a place for himself in the moving file of runners.

Before the first lap was finished Blake had displaced Hodgson in the lead and soon afterwards three boys from School House also passed him. Hodgson cast a quick glance over his shoulder to find out what had become of his first string, whom he discovered still in an outside berth and

travelling yards further than the remainder of the field.

It was then that the spectators witnessed an example of unrehearsed pace-making such as is all too seldom seen. The chivalrous Hodgson detached himself from the living string, as it wound its way round the congested inside edge of the track, and began to pilot Buchanan wide of the field. It was a desperate venture, for the boys of Sivart's were running yards farther than their rivals at each lap, but still Hodgson, very near the end of his tether now, hoped against hope for a break in the line, of which Jock might take advantage.

That longed-for opportunity never came. Just before the bell was rung for the final lap, the three bearers of the School House colours shot forward, but Blake would not give way to them. The four boys now formed a quartette running in two pairs, with Blake, the fastest finisher of them all, splendidly shielded in the front, inside berth.

The situation appeared hopeless to Sivart's supporters. Hodgson had dropped right back, and Jock was well out in the middle of the track. His friends roared at him to go on and take the lead ; Jim was on his feet, silent but trembling with excitement. If only Jock would have the nerve to wait for the right moment !

With wonderful judgment for one with so little racing experience, Jock reserved his effort. Then, as the home straight was reached at last, he let himself go. Gradually, with great strides, he drew level with the struggling four, and all the time the pace was piling up. One by one, and then all together, they tried to fight off his challenge ; inch by inch he brought them back. Then he was past them, and strode on to win a wonderful race, which set the eyes of the onlookers blazing with a fire of enthusiasm.

" Oh, splendid, splendid ! " triumphed Jim. " I didn't think he could do it, Padre dear ! "

The Reverend Alan's features were just one big, beaming smile ; he, too, was delighted. Points, scoring for the House Championship, are reckoned from first to fourth place at Brankstone, and, despite Jock's great win, Sivart's were still well behind School House and Mitchell's.

" Everything depends on you now, Jim," said the Reverend Alan earnestly. " We haven't a hope in the three miles, or the ' half,' nor a chance of placing any one else but yourself in the jumps and the quarter mile. No matter how the other placings go we may still collar the House Championship, according to my calculations, if you can win all three of your remaining events ; but it's a whale of a lot to hope for."

" I'll do my best, Padre," said Jim, as he got up to answer the call of " All out for the high jump."

Jobson, facing his first event of the afternoon, was very confident and rather amused at the sight of Jim sitting down with a rug wrapped round his legs. The opening proceedings were orthodox but uninteresting. Neither of the two prospective winners commenced jumping until the bar had risen to five feet.

Jim did not remove his track trousers or sweater for the first few jumps, but measured his run-up carefully, and kicked to loosen his hips. From a short trot he sprang lightly into the air and crossed the bar with a neat lay-out that involved a mid-air turn, which brought him face-downwards above the lath, and a sudden spasmodic kick to clear his chest away. The onlookers greeted this delightful exhibition of the true art of high jumping with a salvo of applause. Then Jobson jumped, paying no heed to preparations or style, but bounding over the bar like a hunted buck. It was natural, effective at the present height, but not particularly pretty.

The bar was raised, at first by two inches at a time, and then by one inch, until both boys had cleared five feet nine inches, a height only once before achieved in the long history of Brankstone School. At five feet ten inches Jim produced his turn too early and fell right on to the bar. Then

Jobson jumped and just tipped off the lath with the underside of his thigh. Again they jumped, and again Jobson removed the bar in exactly the same manner ; for, jumping upright, as he did, the whole weight of his body was above his hips. Jim, however, was so nearly over that the people were beginning to clap when his fingers caught the bar and brought it down.

It was now a matter of Jobson's greater natural spring against Dawson's better technique. Jim was taking no chances with his third and final attempt, but a laugh ran round the field as he bent his supple body this way and that and, finally, kicked to the height of the bar to loosen his hips. He waited a moment at the end of his measured approach run, balanced on his toes and filling his lungs with slow, deep breaths.

Then he trotted forward, increasing his pace to lightning speed only in the last three of his ten strides. He seemed to spring from directly under the bar, left leg straight as a ramrod, right leg hanging and arms helping to lift him. As the left leg crossed the bar, the right leg was straightened along the lath, the body, bent at the waist, dropped down to a horizontal lay-out, followed by a sharp twist of the shoulders from left to right, which turned the chest down towards the bar and raised the hips well above it and out of danger. The

right foot dropped towards the pit, the left heel flashed up behind the body, the arms were flung up, and Jim landed on his right foot in the sand-pit facing the bar he had cleared by inches for a new school record.

The applause was tremendous, and after Jobson had jumped right into the bar at his third attempt every one wanted Jim to attempt six feet, a height which, at that time, had never been cleared by a British schoolboy.

Jim felt himself capable of the feat, but refused to attempt it. The Reverend Alan's words were still ringing in his ears, and he was determined to reserve every ounce of his energies for the two events still to be decided. The new record had already added two points to the value of his win over Jobson, and he meant to give himself every chance of carrying Sivart's to victory in the House Championship.

Luckily for Jim, there was a tea interval of half-an-hour before the next event, which was the pole vault. During that half-hour he lay down, wrapped up very warmly, while the Padre gave his legs a light massage, which quickly restored their springiness. His arms and shoulders felt strong enough for anything.

Once again the spectators noticed that Jim left nothing to chance. Again he measured his

approach run, and calculated the height of his hand-hold on the pole with proper care; and before each attempt he cleared the turf from the spikes of his vaulting boots. Jobson, on the other hand, ignored all preparations, but he possessed wonderful spring and was strong enough to lift his body over the bar by sheer strength of arms and shoulders. Both had cleared ten feet in competition; Jim had once gone six inches higher in practice, while ten feet ten inches was the height of the school record.

That afternoon the rivals vaulted level to ten feet three inches, with Jim completing the half foot at the third time of asking. As his friends clustered round him, some urging him to "try another three inches," others begging him to "have a shot at equalling the record," Jim made a rapid calculation. If School House or Mitchell's took three places in one of the running events and two in another, he reckoned that it would be impossible for Sivart's to win, despite what the Padre had said.

"All right, shove the bar to eleven feet," he said quietly, and word ran quickly through the crowd that Dawson was going to try for a new British Public Schools record, for that was what it amounted to.

You could have heard a pin drop as he re-measured his run-up and lengthened it a little to correspond with the distance by which he had

shifted back his take-off mark. No one stirred as he picked up his vaulting pole and weighed it in his hands until he felt that the balance was right. Then he was off, running with smooth, even strides and with the shoulder of his rear arm working backwards and forwards. He was at full speed as the point of the pole shot into the slide-way, and the slap of his take-off foot as he stamped it down sounded as loud as the report of a pistol. Now he was in the air, body rising, from arms held at full stretch, in a perfect pendulum swing. The thin bamboo pole was almost upright, the arm-pull had started, and suddenly his feet shot high above the bar, but as he kicked to turn himself, his body was still a full foot below it, and, to those ignorant of the finer points of the art, it seemed impossible for him to get over from that face downwards position. But just as the pole reached the perpendicular, Jim's legs dropped from the hips, and his bent arms were extended in a clean push-up from the pole, which raised his body some inches above the bar. Then, as the pole fell back, his arms flashed up, his body straightened out, and he fell cleanly to the sand.

His first thought, as he picked himself up, was not for the new record he had made, but that the extra two points it had brought might just enable Sivart's to win the House Championship.

The half-mile followed, and a very curious race

it was. Blake and Buchanan were both in it. The former was the fancied candidate, the latter not being regarded as having enough starting speed for the distance. School House and Mitchell's had each made three entries, and all six were good runners. Blake was a particularly long striding athlete, and on a circumscribed track shared with a large field he was far from happy. In this particular race he found himself unfortunately boxed in just when he could have been making the best use of his powers. He was labouring with strenuous and determined opponents and was afforded neither foot nor elbow room. Pocketed behind the fast rival pace-makers of Mitchell's and School House, and having other speedy opponents at his heels and beside him, poor Blake was, indeed, in a tight fix. Worried and uncertain what to do for the best, he allowed himself to fall into a hopeless indiscretion, as the field entered the home straight. Keen for the honour of his house, he made a sudden dash to win clear, and, in doing so, he gave Buchanan the full force of his elbow right in the pit of the stomach. Jock, completely winded, went down like a pole-axed bullock, and Phil, horrified at the act he had committed, quite unintentionally, pulled up at once. That settled the issue, with School House and Mitchell's claiming the first four places between them.

One or two Lower School events, which did not count towards the Championship, followed, and then came the three miles. For the next quarter of an hour, Jim and Jock sat one on either side of Mr. Stewart, all three of them on the tenterhooks of excitement.

" By gum ! " groaned Jock, when the race was over, " I reckon that's just about finished it," for Mitchell's had obtained first, second and third places.

" There's just a hope yet," interposed the Padre. " Jim's extra points for records give us a chance. If you can win the quarter mile, Jim, and the other houses split up Mitchell's, we shall get home by a single point. If they're second and third, they win ; if they're second and fourth, it will be a tie."

" There's a good deal of ' if ' about it, isn't there, sir ? " said Jock despondently.

" Well, we can only do our best. I must get hold of my second string," said Jim.

He found the boy he wanted in the dressing tent and beckoned him outside.

" Look here, Wheeler," he said, " you've just got to forget everything you've ever been told about pace-making. This quarter is going to be a sprint from start to finish, and we're going to win, only that won't be enough ; we've got to make sure of second or third as well. Even a fourth won't

help, because that will only give us a tie with Mitchell's, and Sivart's is going to be Champion House in half-an-hour's time."

"But don't you want me to cut out the pace for you at the start, Dawson?"

"Cut out nothing," snapped Jim. "If you can beat me to it at the tape, no one will be better pleased than I shall be, but I'm going into the lead from the crack of the pistol if I can manage it. I don't think you'll be able to hold the pace I shall set, and I may crack myself, but I want you to lie about third until we reach the home stretch. Keep enough in hand for a real sprint finish and run the last hundred yards as you've never run before in all your life. That clear?"

"Yes."

"Right, but remember, if I run myself out, everything will depend upon you."

A few minutes later the six finalists toed the starting line. Jim was on the outside station, Bland and Clark of Mitchell's were next, then Wheeler of Sivart's, and Holmes and Bond of School House on the inside. Clark and Bland came away well at the report of the pistol, but Jim, ever an incredibly fast starter, shot across the track on a long slant at hundred yards speed to secure the lead. Holmes moved up at once and displaced Bland in second position, with Clark hanging on to

them a stride or two behind. Wheeler stuck to the pace that he knew he could hold, and the others gradually drew away from him. Every second the cheering spectators thought that Jim must soon let up, and the boys at his flying heels were evidently of the same opinion, for they hung on to him gamely. Suddenly Clark pitched over, completely run out. Holmes and Bland were both flagging, and Jim was off on his own.

Wheeler set his teeth and overtook the struggling pair. Inch by grudging inch Holmes had to let him up, as he himself stole a foot from Bland. All round the ropes people were on their feet cheering madly. Jim saw nothing but a blazing red line stretched breast-high across the track before him. Mad with excitement, he realised that that red line was the tape between the winning posts. As he ripped through it his senses left him, but eager hands caught him as he pitched forward, and a few minutes later he found himself lying on the grass beside Wheeler.

"Golly, what a race! Know what your time was, Dawson?"

"I don't care; where did you finish?" croaked Jim.

"Third. Holmes came again and beat me half-a foot for second. Bland was fourth."

"Good egg! Then we win by five points."

"Seven!"

"How do you make that out?"

"Well, you did fifty-one seconds flat for a new Public Schools record. That's good enough for the extra two points, isn't it?"

Before Jim could answer he was caught up and perched on the shoulders of his frantically excited house fellows, who carried him in triumph to the pavilion. For the boy who could break three Brankstone and two Public Schools records in one afternoon was certainly entitled to an ovation. And Jim got it in full measure.

That night there were wild doings in Sivart's, for Monday was to mark the end of term. In accordance with time-honoured custom no "prep." had been set, and the boys ragged heedlessly among the roped boxes and in the form rooms. When the monitors came to stop them they were cheered to deafness, and when their house master himself appeared the boys cheered him too; for the regeneration of Sivart's had started, and the house that had not won a School Championship for donkey's years was a bit above itself.

Jim, however, collected Jock from the midst of a jamboree early in the evening, and they returned to their study. There, behind bolted doors, they entertained Blake, Holland, little Carson—

now as keen as any for the honour of Sivart's—and half a dozen other senior fellows, to a most imperial feast.

"I shall be sorry to leave the old place," said Holland, who was going up to Oxford.

"And I! and I!" echoed several others who were also leaving.

"I don't feel as if I'd ever known the School until the last fortnight, and I'm leaving too," volunteered Carson, rather dolefully.

"We've got another year yet," said Jim, with a nod to Jock.

"I shouldn't wonder if Sivart doesn't make one of you fellows head of the house," prophesied Hodgson.

"In that case we shall have to reform," grinned Jock. "No more japes with Mitchell, eh, Jim? That'd be a pity, wouldn't it?"

"I've heard a rumour," said Joe Holland, "that Mitchell is to be mixed up with some criminal proceedings during the holidays, something to do with the trial of that burglar who was caught in Chief's study. Any one know anything about it?"

The only two people who could have told him all about that episode preserved a discreet silence.

CHAPTER XVII

SOME UNEXPECTED HAPPENINGS

Jim stood on the platform watching the holiday train as it steamed out of Brankstone station. Sivart's fellows had cheered him to the echo as they waved good-bye. He had caught a last glimpse of Jock's face as he leaned far out of a carriage window and had heard the shouted words, "See you in a few weeks, old son." But the train was out of sight now, and somehow the sunshine didn't seem quite as bright as it had been.

He turned to stroll idly through the town. These holidays were going to be very different from the last. Joe Holland was going to Scandinavia with his people. Phil Blake was off for a walking tour in France with Hodgson, and Jock, as he put it, disrespectfully enough, was due to drag round London with a maiden aunt, who found the Tower of London exhilarating, regarded a visit to Hampton Court as an adventure, but thought that modern theatres were too advanced for young people. Jim, however, was to join his chum in London at the

end of August, and they were to go North together for some shooting.

Meanwhile, there were four weary weeks to be got through at Brankstone, with the " Darkies " and one or two small kids from foreign parts for company. He had not heard yet which master was to remain in charge, but he hoped to goodness it would not be Mitchell.

The remainder of the morning yielded him no amusement, and he was in the mood for any mischief as he strolled back across the fields towards the school. There was one particular short cut which saved a full mile, but the boys were never allowed to use it, since the farmer who owned the land had a long standing feud with Brankstone School and was only too eager to prosecute if he caught any venturesome Brankstonian trespassing. For this reason Dr. Harvey had put both the footpath and the whole of Farmer Simkins's land out of bounds.

In his present frame of mind Jim didn't care a hoot about bounds or such small matters as trespass. Wherefore he vaulted the stile, cocked his cap well over one eye, and went whistling up the bridle-path between the trees. Now and again he stopped to watch a bird or listen to the sound of stealthy movement in the undergrowth. That pleased him ; for, although he would never have

admitted as much even to himself, he was playing a lonely game of make-believe, in the hope of persuading himself, if only for a fleeting moment, that he was back in the African forests he loved so well.

His plaintive whistle died away, and presently he found himself humming one of those jolly songs the natives sing as the hunter's *safari* wends into camp at the end of the long day's trek. He took himself firmly in hand and squared his shoulders.

"Here, this won't do!" he muttered. "And, hang it, I'll be late for lunch if I don't sprint!"

He broke into a long, loping trot, and had almost reached the end of the wood, when a shrill scream for help came faintly to his ears.

Jim buttoned up his blazer and raced along the path. There was a five-barred gate at the end of the ride, but he took it in his stride. And then he wondered what might be the cause of the cry for help.

Farmer Simkins's big red bull was loose in that field certainly, and the animal was obviously annoyed. There it stood tossing its shaggy head, snorting and pawing the ground. Its eyes blazed wickedly, but Jim could not see a sign of the cause of the beast's anger. Its attention, however, seemed to be centred upon a clump of bushes growing at the edge of a dry pond. Out from this shelter there careered suddenly a small dog. A plucky

little beast, too, for it made straight for the bull's nose and tried to pin him. How it escaped the savage charge that followed was a miracle, but it was given no chance to re-assume the offensive. Right across the field and into a far corner the bull drove the little beggar, until at last it had to turn and fight. There could be only one end to that sort of contest, of course. Three or four times the dog escaped the sweep of the terrible horns, but at last it was caught, flung into the air, and stamped underfoot as it came tumbling down.

Jim had seen many horrible things during the War in East Africa, but, somehow, the slaying of that plucky little pup made him feel sick. He was not the only person who had witnessed the slaying. From the depth of the bushes a plump young woman appeared, with a stout stick clasped in her trembling hand. She gave vent to a cry between a shriek of sorrow and a bellow of rage. That was unfortunate, because it attracted the bull's attention, and a moment later she was running across the field, as fast as her build would permit, and the beast was tearing after her.

Jim saw that she could not possibly reach a place of safety in time, for the bull was gaining upon her at every jump. In a moment the boy's mind was made up. He whipped off his blazer and holding it by the collar dashed forward to meet the panting

girl. As she stumbled past him, he yelled to her to go on and get out of the field. He had no time for more, because the maddened brute was almost on top of them.

Jim's pulses had raced madly in that swift rush to meet the danger, but now he felt suddenly as cool as ice. Not a muscle moved as the brute bore down upon him, but when it appeared that the next instant must be his last Jim sprang lightly to one side, and, as he did so, pulled his blazer firmly over the bull's horns. He did not wait to see the effect of the strategy he had last seen used out East by a hunter who was caught unarmed by a disgruntled old rhinoceros. He knew that his flimsy jacket would serve to blind the bull's eyes for but a moment or two at the most, and so he bolted at top speed for the shelter of the woods. Before he reached them he heard the thunder of hoofs behind him, and his flesh crept and his back went cold at the spot where he imagined one of the long horns would enter. Then the gate was before him, but as he shot over it he heard the crash as the bull's head met and shattered some of the bars, but mercifully the rest held.

The girl too had reached safety, but Jim wondered why she continued to lie upon the ground in that peculiarly uncomfortable position. He bent over her, rather embarrassed, and tried to lift

her up. A groan came from her lips, and he laid her down. A moment later her eyes opened.

"Oh, my leg!" she moaned. "I believe it's broken. I fell in my hurry to get over the gate."

"That's bad," said Jim. "What do you think we'd better do about it?"

"If you go round the field and up to the farm, my father would send down some men with a hurdle to carry me home," she suggested, "but look out for the dog."

"I will," said Jim wholeheartedly.

He made the girl as comfortable as he could before setting off at a brisk trot on his mission of mercy. There was no one about as he approached the farmhouse, for it was the dinner hour—the hands had left their work, and the farmer was indoors at his meal.

Jim was anxious to get to his own lunch and voiced a ringing "Hulloa!" as he made his way through an orchard close to the house. The next second he was flying for his life from an ugly beast of a bull-terrier that seemed most anxious to make his closer acquaintance.

A low hanging branch of a pear-tree afforded a possible refuge, and Jim took it. His arms, hardened by months of pole vaulting, took the strain of that full speed jump without difficulty, and his legs swung upwards, but not quite quick enough,

The bull-terrier sprang at the same instant, and when he reached earth again he had one leg of Jim's trousers clenched between his teeth. Jim, who was a bit of a philosopher, thanked his lucky stars that it was not in his calf that the brute had fastened its teeth.

The animal sat down and gazed up at its prisoner. Close beside it lay Jim's school cap, which had fallen from his head. Jim decided that his throat was too dry to be used for more shouting at the moment and picked himself a pear. He was munching it in comparative content when the farmer, who had heard his first hulloa, arrived.

Farmer Simkins was choleric of countenance and temper. He held in his hand the pitchfork he generally used as a staff, and the sight he saw made him very angry.

"Why, if it ain't one of them collegers," he exploded, as he caught sight of the badge on Jim's cap, "a eatin' of my pears too, an' in broad daylight. Saw any one ever the like?"

"Just call off your dog, will you, and I'll come down and explain?" requested Jim coolly. "But you'll have to stand me a new pair of bags, you know. These are finished!"

He waved his bare leg deprecatingly.

"So I'll have to buy 'ee noo trousers, will I? And tha'l't come down an' explain if I call off

Pincher? Tha'l't come down arl right, my lad. Maybe I'll fork 'ee down for Pincher to have a go at. But call him off I will not, for I'd never see the way tha went, once thy feet were on th' ground."

"My good man," expostulated Jim, "your daughter——"

"Eh? What dost tha know 'bout my darter?"

The farmer's red face was slowly turning purple with wrath. Jim tried again.

"Mr. Simkins, your bull——"

"Ah! It's my bull now; it was my darter afore."

Jim was growing both desperate and angry.

"Look here, sir, your daughter's little dog——"

"Little dawg? Why, the boy don't know his own mind for two minutes together."

The farmer turned and waddled away, deaf to the pieces of information Jim shouted after him. Just within ear-shot he turned and bellowed back in a stentorian voice:

"You bide where you be, my boy, till I get hold of a policeman." To the dog he added: "Watch him, Pincher."

That amiable animal signified his full intention of doing so with a deep, ferocious growl.

"This is evidently my day out," said Jim, and helped himself to another pear.

An hour went by before the farmer reappeared

accompanied by a bucolic-looking constable. Jim was of the opinion that this reinforcement had been recruited from the nearest pub. He was pretty well sure the man did not belong to the Brankstone Town police force. Once again Jim embarked upon the task of explanation, but the constable was even less inclined to listen than the farmer had been.

" You tell that tale to the magistrate," was his parrot-like reply.

" All right, have it your own tom-fool way then," said Jim, losing his temper. " But if the girl dies of shock or gangrene or whatever girls with broken legs do die of, don't blame me. Call off that beastly dog, and I'll come down."

Mr. Simkins whistled Pincher to him and passed through his collar a handkerchief that had seen far better days. But Jim refused to leave his perch until the dog was taken away and put on its chain ; and the policeman, being disinclined to climb up and fetch him, the farmer was forced to comply with his request. As Jim reached the ground the constable grabbed him.

" I'll just put the handcuffs on you for safety's sake," he said, " and then I'm going to take you back to the school," he added, with a grin. " Magistrate 'ud only fine you, but I reckon your master'll wallop you proper for this eskypade."

Jim was furious. He could explain, of course,

except about taking the path that was out of bounds, but what a fool he'd look, coming back to school in charge of a policeman, minus his blazer and one trouser leg! Then a new thought struck him. Suppose it should be Mitchell to whom he would have to explain, what a score it would be for the house master! That settled it! Never again, swore Jim to himself, would he go to the aid of a damsel in distress.

"You'll take a pint o' beer before you go, constable?"

"Thank'ee, Muster Simkins, I don't mind if I do."

The constable took off his helmet and wiped his head, for the day was warm. Then he sat down in the porch and absorbed his beer slowly, but he never let Jim far enough away from him for it to be worth while trying to bolt. At last he was ready, but just as they were setting out the plump girl, very woe-begone and draggled and groaning at every step, came hobbling into view.

At the sight of Jim's predicament she uttered a shrill scream and came hopping forward. A dislike for listening to explanations was evidently a family failing, for Farmer Simkins could not get in one word edgeways, as his daughter poured out upon him the vials of her displeasure. According to her, the least of the things he was was "a fat-headed,

fower-eyed old fule" not to have listened to her rescuer; and what did he mean, anyway, by trying to steal the poor young gentleman's trousers?

The constable too came in for his share of the tongue-lashing, but long before the three of them had finished shouting at one another, Jim had collapsed upon the seat in the porch, too weak with laughter to stand up any longer.

The end of it was that the constable, only too glad to escape from the girl's tongue, took himself off. But Jim they would not let go until he had eaten a hearty meal. Finally, they sent him home in a pair of the farmer's breeches which he was able comfortably to lap twice round his middle. Down by the swimming bath he ran into one of the "Darkies," whom he swore to secrecy and sent flying to Sivart's to bring him back a respectable pair of trousers.

"And if you tell any one that you've seen me in this get-up I'll jolly well knock your ugly head off," was Jim's mode of expressing his thanks.

The boy swore that he would be silent as the grave, and it was from him that Jim learned that Mr. Stewart was remaining in charge of the holiday boarders.

In his study Jim found awaiting him a letter from his father. He read it through twice and then

sat for a long time staring out of the window. No one speaking to old Bob Dawson—or Hunter Dawson as he was affectionately styled out East—would ever have mistaken him for anything but a gentleman. That peculiarly elusive quality which no money can buy was bred in his bones, but when it came to writing a letter he was almost illiterate. Four years at a first-rate preparatory school had given him a good grounding, but less than a term at a public school in the bad old bullying days had sickened him, and he had run away to sea. Ship's boy before the mast at fourteen, he had led a rough life for the last forty years. War, adventure, plague, and famine, he had known them all, but he had won through, sticking fast to the creed of his forefathers, finding friends always among the men of the class from which he was sprung. But education he had had none.

As usual, it had taken Jim some time to decipher the difficult writing, but what he had read had made him thoughtful. His father wrote of the amazing prospects of the mine, but dealt frankly with the increasing difficulty he found in controlling a concern which was becoming bigger and more important month by month.

" You see, Jim boy," he wrote, " I'm only a poor, uneducated old big game hunter. I can boss the native labour all right, and I've yet to meet the

fellow who could twist me on a matter of straightforward figuring. But when it comes to questions of estimates and what they call statistics I must admit I'm beat. People spot it, of course, for it isn't difficult to find the crack in the jar you carry from the well—as the Zulu saying is—and that's just where we're going to suffer.

" As I see things, it's over late for this old dog to start learning new tricks, and so, my son, it's up to you. Another year or two in England, so that you can finish off a real slap-up education at Oxford or Cambridge, and I shall want you back here as my right hand man.

" It might even happen that I couldn't spare you longer than you'll be at Brankstone—couldn't let you go on to the 'Varsity at all. It's not likely things will break that way, but it might happen. A good deal depends on the new mine manager." (There followed a name that was unreadable.) " He's a fine fellow, so far as I can judge at present. Curiously enough, he's a friend of yours, and is never finished with singing your praises. Why didn't you tell me about that fight you had when you were at Blent ? I'd like fine to have been in it. Your friend couldn't describe it exactly as an eye-witness, for he seems to have had a pretty fair handful to tackle himself. You put up a mighty good show, Jim boy, by all accounts, and evidently

some of the things you learned out here in the wilds are standing you in good stead at home. I'm mighty pleased with you, my son, but it's really about your work I want to talk.

" Enjoy yourself, of course, but don't waste your opportunities. I've worked hard for the big success, and it's come. I can't handle it alone indefinitely, because I haven't had the education, and sometimes I feel bitter about it. Then I think of you at home in England and realise that we're still working together, just as we used to share everything together on *safari*, for I guess, Jim, that you're pulling your weight and preparing yourself to come back ' into the blue ' as my partner."

Jim sat for some moments pondering over his father's letter. He was tremendously pleased to think that Leif Bateson had joined up with the " old man," for it could be no one else, although he could not read the name his father had written. Bateson was just the very man. He was a first-class mining engineer, and just the sort of chap that his father would get on with splendidly.

At that stage of his career he would not have been sorry to forego the University part of his education, if, by so doing, he could get back to Africa the sooner. But with Bateson installed as manager of the Kilima Mali mine there was not much chance of

his father sending him an S.O.S. to return at once. Besides, his father wanted him to go right through with this education business, and that was all there was to it. He meant honestly to live up to his father's hopes. He was not the type of boy to shirk an issue, and so he tried fairly and squarely to face the question of whether he was really fulfilling his father's expectations.

He was just on eighteen years of age now, and he was still in the Fifth. Was that good enough ? He decided that it was not. He was a Senior Option in Sivart's House, and still not a monitor. Was that good enough either ? Again the answer was " No." He took no credit for his successes in sport. They were important, of course, and he knew that he had pleased his father immensely by achieving them, but he was too shrewd a lad to believe that excellence in sport alone is sufficient equipment for a man in the big battle of life when school-days are left behind.

After awhile he folded up his father's letter and went slowly downstairs to interview Mr. Stewart. He told his tale of the day's adventure quite frankly, not seeking to gloss over the fact that he had broken bounds by taking the field path across Farmer Simkins's land. In fact, he rather emphasised his misdemeanour.

" We won't say too much about that, Jim,"

smiled the house tutor, "for I think you've had your punishment already. You usually score off other people, don't you? I'd have given a lot to have seen you treed by that brindled dog."

Jim grinned back at the master, and there was a daring twinkle in his eyes.

"Well, I've never scored off you, anyway, Padre."

"And, my goodness, don't you start trying!" puffed the Reverend Alan, with assumed anger "I'm getting too fat to be bothered by bad boys."

Jim laughed, but, although the matter was finished, he did not offer to go.

"Is there anything else, Dawson?"

"Yes, Padre. I wonder if you would mind reading a letter?"

"Certainly. Sit down while I do so. Have you got it here?"

Jim handed over his father's letter. After he had finished reading it the Reverend Alan sat thinking for a long time, just as Jim had done.

"A fine character, your father, Jim," he said at last, and added, "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know, sir," Jim hesitated. "That is to say, I thought——"

"Well?"

"I mean, sir, you've been awfully decent to me

since I came here, and I wondered if you'd help me over this ? "

Jim had got it out at last, and the Reverend Alan smiled a smile such as only a few privileged people had seen upon his cheery countenance. It was rather wistful and full of understanding.

" What do you suggest ? "

" I wondered if you could give me some extra coaching during these holidays, sir ? "

" With all the will in the world, Jim. How would the mornings suit you, or would you rather work at night ? "

" Whatever you say goes, Padre."

" Then we'll make it the mornings. Nine o'clock to-morrow for a start."

" I'm tremendously grateful, sir," said Jim, and at that they left it.

The weeks that Jim had feared would prove so wearisome passed very pleasantly. Each morning for two or three hours he worked steadily with Mr. Stewart, and many an afternoon they spent together fishing, or tramping the country-side, or took their bicycles and visited some place of interest in the neighbourhood. More often than not, however, Jim would stroll over to Simkins's farm after lunch, for he had conceived a great liking for the rough old fellow with his vast knowledge of country lore and English zoology.

One afternoon, when they had finished discussing the habits of badgers and others of the more rare English animals, the farmer broke a lengthy silence.

"Be you any relative of Squire Dawson over at Dawtry Grange, Muster Jim?" he queried.

"Not that I know of," Jim answered. "Why do you ask?"

"Because you be most mighty like young Captain Dawson, what was killed by them Boers in the South African War. Squire missed his son sorely, never bin the same man since—he ain't."

"Got a pig's head on their harness," interposed plump Lydia, looking up from her sewing. "It do seem to me a strange badge for folks like them to take."

"A boar's head, eh!" exclaimed Jim. "Why, I've seen that crest on a ring my father wears."

"Then you mark my words," said the farmer, "you're one o' the Dawsons of Dawtry right enough! You ought to meet Sir Oswald, Muster Jim."

Shortly after this conversation a rent day came round, and Farmer Simkins spoke of Jim to Sir Oswald's agent. It was a small circumstance in itself, but, for many reasons, of great importance. As the outcome of it Jim received an unexpected invitation to lunch at Dawtry Grange. He obtained

Mr. Stewart's permission to go and rode over on his bicycle.

He found his host a grand old man in the seventies, and was struck with the resemblance between Sir Oswald and his own father. Then his eyes were caught by a large portrait of a young man in khaki that hung above the mantelpiece, and he was bound to admit that Simkins's shrewd old eyes had truly recognised the likeness between himself and Sir Oswald's son.

The Baronet's eyes followed the direction of Jim's glance, and a slow, sad smile moved his lips.

" My son," he murmured. " You are very like him, Dawson. But come, tell me about your people."

Jim related as much of his father's history as he knew, or could remember, but Sir Oswald did not speak until long after the tale was finished.

" It is incredible, and more than chance, that we should have met like this, Dawson," he said at last. " Your father is one of the last of the Bodmin branch of the Dawsons without a doubt. He was left an orphan as a baby, and it was a guardian who sent him to school. I was abroad on Colonial service at the time, but I well remember how he vanished, and what pains the rest of us were at to trace him."

" He will be glad to hear that I have met you, sir."

The old man leaned forward across the luncheon table and laid an impressive hand over Jim's.

" You are the last of the line, my boy," he said solemnly. " When your father and I are gone, you will inherit Dawtry and the baronetcy."

Jim stared at his host in amazement, but he did not speak, and after a while Sir Oswald went on :

" It is very pleasing to me to hear that your father has discovered this gold mine. Ours was once a great house, but fortune after fortune has been squandered, and we have fallen upon evil times. It will be your privilege to restore our ancient glories some day. Will you come and stay with me ? "

There was nothing in the wide world that Jim would have liked better, but he remembered his father's letter and the pains the Padre was taking with his coaching, and so he refused the invitation.

" You see, sir," he explained, " I'm a bit backward, and Mr. Stewart is doing his best to get me fit for the Sixth—because of this letter dad wrote me, you know—and so I think I ought to stick it out and learn as much as I can while I've got the chance. I hope you won't be offended, sir ? "

" Splendid, splendid ! Mind ? Not a bit of it ! That's the spirit that made my son and young

Roberts and Congreve stand by the guns at Colenso. But a mine manager? Well, I hardly think so! We'll have to make a soldier of you."

"I've been that already, sir," smiled Jim. "Father and I both served through the East African Campaign and against the Somalis in Jubaland."

"You did? Marvellous! Well, come and see me again whenever you like, and come often, for I'm a lonely old man without kith or kin; and, any way, you must spend the Christmas part of your next holidays with me."

CHAPTER XVIII

A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW

BRANKSTONE was, and still is, one of the five big Rugger schools, and six hundred odd boys reassembled for the Christmas term, eager for the game which stood higher in their estimation than any other. Jim had enjoyed the last fortnight of his holidays in Scotland immensely, but sport with gun and rod were soon forgotten, and all the long journey South, first to London and then on to Brankstone, Jock and he had discussed football.

There were the usual doubts and hopes. Joe Holland and half-a-dozen other of the big men were gone, but many boys in the Second Fifteen had played up brilliantly towards the end of last season, and so, perhaps, the old school wasn't going to do so badly after all.

The main matter for speculation, not only with the chums of Number Ten Study, but right through the school, was as to who would succeed Holland in the captaincy. Most people seemed to think that Phil Blake, Head of the School, who was keeping his

last term, would secure the honour, but Jobson had a big following, not only because he was a first-rate forward, but because he had brought Mitchell's along nicely since he had been appointed Head of that House.

It was the custom at Brankstone for last year's colours to elect their own Captain for the forthcoming season, and they were due to meet in Blake's study to settle the question on the first Saturday evening of term.

Meanwhile Mr. Stewart had seen the Headmaster, to whom he explained the work Jim had done and the progress he had made during the holidays. The little Padre also had a long heart-to-heart talk with Mr. Sivart. As the result of these good offices, Jim found himself appointed Head of Sivart's and a school monitor. To his further satisfaction, he was moved up into the Sixth Form, and accordingly cocked his cap over one ear, instead of wearing it peak to the back as the rest of the school must do. He had now the right to a study of his own, but asked, and received, permission to stay on with Jock Buchanan in Number Ten.

Phil Blake presided at the Colours Committee and opened the ball straight away by proposing Jim as captain, a proposition instantly seconded by Jock.

"But what about yourself, Phil?" Jim pro-

tested. "You're the senior colour and the most experienced player of us all."

"I'm not standing for the captaincy, thank you, Jim. This is my last term, and I've got to work for a 'Schol' if I want to get up to Cambridge. I'm playing, of course, but I couldn't spare the time to run the school Rugger; besides, I think you'd do it a lot better than I should."

Jim's only comment upon that was an emphatic "Rot!"

Jobson and Lloyd of Mitchell's looked rather glum, but Naylor of School House supported Blake and Buchanan, and so Sivart's juniors, led by Randall and Perkins, were able to hold an extra special rag to celebrate the honour attained by their house with the appointment of Jim as Rugby captain.

Young Randall, bubbling over with delight, led a raid upon Mitchell's house, where a gloat was executed in the most highly approved manner. Desks and forms were overturned and the air of Mitchell's Junior Common Room grew thick with ink-pots and exercise books and other missiles, while the battle raged. Unfortunately the combatants overflowed into the corridor, and Jobson's study door was burst open. He drove out all the leaders save one, and Sivart's stalwarts returned to their house minus their leader.

"I've a good mind to go up and tell Dawson or

Buchanan," said Perkins doubtfully. " Jobson is a hairy swine, and I'm afraid he'll half murder poor old Randall. Did you see that wopping great stick lying on the table ? "

His comrades admitted that they had seen it, and shook their heads sorrowfully. Perkins made his way to Number Ten Study, still wondering what he ought to do ; but the room was empty when he arrived. A few minutes earlier Jim had decided that he would make a round of the houses to discuss with their Rugby captains the lists which were to be drawn up for the first Big Side game of the term, and Jock had offered to go with him.

Blake, they found, had all his suggestions for Hooper's lot already written out, but Naylor wanted to discuss some points concerning School House " Possibles," and half-an-hour had passed therefore before they finally crossed the Quad. to Mitchell's. Jim had been told, by a small boy he met coming down the stairs, that Jobson was in. He was surprised, therefore, when no answer was given to repeated rappings on Jobson's door.

The two boys of Sivart's were about to give it up, when a low moan, that was half a tearful wail, reached their ears. They looked at one another with questioning eyes, and Jim applied his knuckles more vigorously than ever to the door panels. Again that low moan reached them, but this time

it seemed as though it was very quickly suppressed. Jim's mouth was grim, and he kept blowing out his nostrils in a way his friend very well recognised.

"There's something going on here that I don't understand. I'm going in," he announced grimly.

"D'you think we ought?" temporised Jock.

For at Brankstone one simply does not enter another fellow's study when he has shut the door and refuses to answer to one's knocking. The custom was established long ago to allow a boy to work undisturbed if he wanted to. But Jim was not concerned with questions of etiquette at the moment. He wanted to know what sort of "work" Jobson was doing. He turned the handle, but the door refused to open.

"Locked, eh? This looks worser and worser." There was an unpleasant set grin on his features. "Come on, Jock, put that hefty shoulder of yours to it."

It is doubtful if Jim could have burst open the door unaided, but Jock's strength was a matter of school romance in those days and was to become legendary in the years long after he had left. One mighty effort the Scotsman made, and the door flew open as if it had been dynamited.

Jobson faced them with flushed, angry face and flashing eyes.

" What do you mean by breaking in like this ? " he demanded.

But they weren't taking any notice of Jobson at the moment. Their whole attention was concentrated upon the pitiful spectacle of little Randall huddled up in a corner. The boy seemed completely dazed, his eyes were puffy with crying, he was trembling in every aching limb, and, now and then, low moans of pain escaped his lips. The heavy walking-stick that Jobson still held in his hand was evidently the instrument of torture.

Jim was white to the lips as he swung round upon Jobson.

" I'll deal with you in a minute," he said. " Jock, will you take that poor little kid over to Sivart's ? "

" I'm staying here," announced Jock.

" Please, old man ! He's my fag, and I'd rather handle the matter myself, if you don't mind."

Buchanan picked up Randall without further argument, and the door closed behind them.

" Look here, Dawson," blustered the Head of Mitchell's, " that beastly little animal of yours came barging into my study, and I was perfectly within my rights in punishing him."

" You're a monitor, Jobson," Jim answered, " and have the right to use a cane—not a cudgel. I'm not going to argue with you. This business is

altogether too bad for chin-wagging. Are you going to fight like a gentleman or not? If so, I'll meet you at the old milling ground to-morrow morning before breakfast."

By way of answer, Jobson, mad with rage and half in a panic, lashed out at him with the stick he held. Jim caught the stick as the blow fell, and wrested it from his grasp. A moment later he had seized the bully by the collar of his coat. Out in Africa Jim had seen murderous natives flogged for their sins, and he knew his job. For ten minutes he dealt well and faithfully with Jobson, then broke the stick across his knee and flung the pieces into the fender.

"And if ever you lay hands on young Randall, or any other little kid, again, Jobson, you know what to expect," he concluded, and then the door slammed behind him.

Jock looked very grave when he heard what had happened.

"I think you ought to have reported the whole thing to Sivart, Jim," he said solemnly. "A stand-up fight between seniors is all very well, but it's a pretty serious thing for one monitor to take it upon himself to beat another."

"You think that, do you? Well, I think I've been most amazingly merciful. Chief would have expelled him for what he did to Randall. We don't

want Brankstone to get a rotten name for bullying, do we ? "

" We certainly don't."

" Very well, then. Jobson's had his drubbing. He won't talk about it, and neither shall we. And, you can take my word for it, Master Jobson will walk mighty warily in future, for he knows what to expect if he tries any more monkey tricks. But we must see that young Randall keeps his mouth shut."

Jobson, although he was a " colour," did not play in the first game on Big Side, and the rest of the school wondered why he moved so stiffly. That term was the one in which Brankstone played all their big school matches, except the Sledford fixture, and it was the term of that extraordinary series of triumphs which will be talked of and remembered for many a long year to come.

The Reverend Alan was indefatigable in his coaching, and Jim proved his genius for leadership. Many of his ideas were of a highly revolutionary nature, for he had studied athletic lore very keenly, and was determined to apply the true principles of training to the building up of the school Fifteen. Many an afternoon when, in other years, the boys would have been engaged in practice games, Jim sent them for runs or insisted upon tactical exercises, or the practice of Rugby movements, or the

working out of special schemes of combination in attack and defence.

Brankstone did not take kindly to such innovations at first, but Jim was firm, and Mr. Stewart backed him up in all he did. Matters, however, assumed a different aspect after the first few matches had been played and won. For example, the Harlequins sent down an exceptionally strong " A " team, that held Brankstone penned in their own twenty-five for the first forty minutes, only to find themselves run off their feet by Jim's fit followers in the second half. Team after team was met and defeated, for neither club side nor school could master Brankstone that season.

Meanwhile Jim came but seldom into contact with Mr. Mitchell. The master had retired from playing Rugby upon his marriage, and the Headmaster himself took the Sixth Form in many of their subjects ; masters, other than Mitchell, instructing them in the rest.

Jock, still in the Fifth, continued to suffer Mitchell's " whips and scorpions," and retailed with gusto the master's veiled allusions to the growing influence of Africa in the school. But Jim only smiled and voted Mitchell a " gloomy ass."

Towards the end of term the main topic of interest at Brankstone became the Headship of the School. Every one knew that Phil Blake would be leaving.

Jobson was the next monitor in seniority, but Heads of the School are not appointed in rotation at Brankstone. Jock and the rest of Sivart's thought hopefully of Jim's prospects, but were not unaware of a strong under-current that was working against his interests.

The Randall incident had inspired Jobson with the most bitter and implacable hatred for the Head of Sivart's, nor were matters improved by the calm contempt with which Jim treated his enemy's very obvious feelings.

One result of the feud was that Jobson, first-class forward though he was, simply could not play good football in the same side with Jim. Time and again excellent opportunities were thrown away because he would not, or could not, combine with his captain, nor would he pull his weight or play his part in Jim's preconceived schemes. In the end Jim, out of justice to the school, was compelled to drop him from the team. Whereupon Jobson proceeded to play so brilliantly for the Second Fifteen as to justify his place in the First. Time and again he was reinstated, and time and again he fell from grace. At last Jim told him frankly that as apparently he found it impossible to play the game according to orders he would be relegated permanently to the Second Fifteen.

Mitchell's, to a man, resented the slight put upon

them, and Jobson came to be regarded as something of a long-suffering martyr, especially as no boy was more generous than was he in applause when Jim brought off some brilliant pieces of play in the school matches. Jobson too kept in well with Dr. Harvey, for he was an excellent classical scholar, and went out of his way to excel Jim in scholastic work.

The senior boys were fully aware of the feud existing between Jobson and Jim, although they knew neither the rights nor the wrongs of the case, and Jock saw, with growing dismay, that Jim was becoming increasingly unpopular as Jobson convinced them that he had been unfairly treated by Jim, who, he suggested, had dropped him from the First Fifteen through no other reason than petty spite and jealousy.

Jim knew all about these underhand workings of his enemy, but was too proud to try to check them.

"Not I, Jock," he said in answer to his friend's urgent appeals. "If the fellows are not satisfied with my management of the team they can find another captain, but I will not have Jobson back in the team, for the reasons I have given already, nor will I explain the cause of the trouble between us. I settled the business of young Randall with him at the beginning of term, and the incident is completely closed, so far as I am concerned."

"But, Jim, just think what a rotten Head of the School Jobson would make! That's what he's playing up for, you know."

"Maybe he would," Jim answered stubbornly, "but I'm not going to move in the matter, and that's all there is to it. I'm not going to play in the same team with a man who puts his own feelings before the good of his side."

A week before the election was to take place there was trouble in Sivart's. Several boys suddenly developed sore throats, and then it was discovered that the drains were all wrong. The Headmaster decided that the necessary repairs and alterations should stand over until the holidays, but meanwhile the house was to be closed. The homeless Sivart's, therefore, were distributed among the other houses, and the chums of Number Ten Study found themselves, to their no small consternation, billeted upon Mitchell's. This placed them in the hands of the Fifth Form master and under the authority of Jobson, who moved up to a study in the turret to make room for the influx.

Things, however, did not turn out so badly as they had feared might be the case. The master, apparently, saw little of his house now that he was married, and Jobson kept himself very much to himself in his attic study up under the eaves. The boys from Number Ten dug in for the time

being with Lloyd of the First Fifteen in his big room on the first floor.

Brankstone, at that time, had not grown to its present proportions. It was still the imposing mass of battlemented old grey stone, unmarred by the many new red-brick class-rooms, laboratories, and houses that have since been added. Mitchell's house was one of four very ancient buildings forming the Quad. It had one single, narrow spiral staircase which twisted right down from the tower, in which Jobson had his temporary study, to the famous iron-studded door that opened directly into Big School.

At precisely ten o'clock each evening, when the School Sergeant went his rounds, this door was locked for the night, and at six o'clock in the morning it was re-opened. There was another staircase, used only by masters and the servants, by which Mr. Mitchell came and went to and from his new house, which had been built across the high road running past Brankstone. No boy ever used that exit. Their way up and down was by " The Corkscrew " and through " The Door."

The fact that their house opened directly into Big School, where morning prayers were held, was a source of pride to Mitchell's, and of envy to the rest of the school, since Mitchell's fellows not only escaped the wet and the cold of the winter's mornings,

but were able also to get at least two minutes longer in bed. There was this about it, however, the monitor on duty each morning, when not a Mitchellite, saw to it that " The Door " was closed to the tick of the clock at eight, and no unfortunate boy of the house who was late was ever let in for Call Over before Prayers.

In the second morning after Mitchell's had been obliged to take in some of Sivart's boarders, the monitor on duty closed the door at what he believed to be the appointed time. Old Jock, ever a late riser, came strolling down the stairs and, seeing the door closed, stopped to consult his watch. According to that turnip it wanted yet a minute to the hour.

Jock raised his voice and demanded that " The Door " should be re-opened. There was no answer, and he gave the door a tentative shove with his hand. The latch was not down, but some one was leaning against the other side.

" Get out of the light," said Jock to the expectant small fry clustered round him.

Jock made a sort of lurching drive at " The Door," and it shot open. The monitor who had pressed his shoulders against it flew several feet before he sat down—with more force than elegance.

" Sorry," said Jock, picking him up. " Mustn't shut ' The Door ' before eight o'clock, you know."

Two nights later Jock was to make school history at that same portal. The three boys in Lloyd's study had sat up late with the Reverend Alan, who also was stopping in Mitchell's, completing their plans for the last match of term. At eleven o'clock the Padre rose with an " It's late ! Off to bed with you, my sons." And long before midnight every one in the house was fast asleep.

How it happened will never be known. There is a suspicion that some one may have been smoking in his study and that a smouldering cigarette-end caused the mischief ; others say that an electric wire fused, and still others that a beam, crossing a chimney, had been burning, deep hidden, for days. Speculation, however, is beside the point.

Shortly before day-break a second-floor boy was awakened, coughing, by a whiff of pungent smoke. The boy sat up and looked about him. There was no sign of fire, but each moment it was becoming more difficult to breathe. He got quickly out of bed, then let out an agonised yell, for the floor had pretty well blistered his bare feet. That single, startled shout aroused the whole dormitory, and to the yells of Marston minor were added the wails of other unfortunates as their feet came in contact with the flooring.

Out of the dormitory and down the passage towards " The Door " streamed the boys, slippered

by now but otherwise still in their night clothes. Other dormitories, study boys, and masters caught the alarm. All turned by custom towards " The Door," and in a moment " The Corkscrew " was filled to overflowing. Still they came, and still the latest arrivals fought fiercely to join those who already were jammed to suffocation against the locked door at the bottom of " The Corkscrew."

Masters and monitors, half-dressed, were struggling valiantly to stem the living, panic-stricken stream, and then came Mr. Stewart. He took in the situation at a glance. As Jim passed him he grabbed him by the sleeve.

" Form a chain across the passage, quick, Jim," he ordered. " Drive them back along the corridor. I'm going to get the other door open."

For some moments a furious struggle was waged, and then the disciplined forces began to drive the terror-maddened mob back towards safety. Part of the danger was averted, but the condition of those who had reached " The Corkscrew " was becoming more desperate each moment. Screams and sobs echoed up the spiral stairway. Down by " The Door " the heat was terrific, and the air almost unbreathable. Many boys had fainted and were only held up by the terrible pressure that shut them in. Those above were still striving to get down to " The Door," while those who had reached

it were fighting as fiercely to regain the floor above. But the weight was with those above, and every instant the pressure grew greater.

At the head of the stairs masters and monitors were dragging boys back to safety, using no kid-glove methods with those who resisted their ministrations. Jock was well to the fore in this work, but, hard as they laboured, every one soon realised that it would be impossible to avert an awful disaster, unless " The Door " was opened in the next few minutes. Some one had gone to fetch Sergeant Jenkins, who had the key, but at present there was no sign of him, and, meanwhile, how on earth could any one get down " The Corkscrew " to force " The Door " ?

Jim looked up at the underside of the stairs above. Each had a ledge which would afford finger hold, but even if he could get down by such means, he knew that he was not strong enough to force " The Door." There was only one man mighty enough to cope with such an obstacle. Where on earth was Jock ?

Jim saw his friend's red head rise above the sea of frightened faces as he dragged a small boy clear of the press and flung him to a master at the top of the stairs. He shouted urgently to him across the crowd, and Jock nodded back to show that he understood.

Using shoulders and heads as stepping stones, Jock clambered up until his fingers grabbed one of the ledges above him. Then he swung downwards from stair to stair and out of sight round the first turn of " The Corkscrew."

The sight of the agonised faces beneath him turned the boy sick, and the foulness of the atmosphere made him almost faint. At last he was at " The Door " with one foot planted firmly on a grinning gargoyle at either side of the springing of the arch. He turned cautiously round until the breadth of his mighty shoulders rested against the top of the door above the upper of the two iron straps that bound it. By dint of manœuvring he found a purchase for his feet and so pressed with all his might until " The Door " groaned again, and the blood was drumming in his ears and his breath coming in great tearing gasps.

At last there was a crack, loud as thunder in that confined space, and " The Door " went down. In a moment the fighting, fainting crowd above surged forward over the wreckage into Big School, and Jock, as he fell, was borne forward on the heads and shoulders of those who came clattering down " The Corkscrew " as the pack below them gave way.

He picked himself up, bleeding in half-a-dozen places, but refused the aid of the willing helpers

who were already attending to the wounded, crushed, and fainting boys. He had last seen Jim upstairs on the blazing landing, and he meant to make quite sure that his chum was safe.

After Jock had disappeared round the bend in the stairs, Mr. Stewart turned to Jim.

"Where's Jobson?"

"Haven't a notion, Padre."

"Where's Jobson? Where's Jobson?"

The question passed from mouth to mouth. But no one had seen the head boy of the house. Jim slipped quietly off along the corridor. It was still possible to reach the second landing, and up the stairs he went. It was evidently upon that floor that the fire had started, for the flames were crackling and snapping wickedly, and the air was full of sulphurous smoke. Jim dashed into a bedroom, dipped a towel into a jug, and bound it round his mouth and nose. A swift leap through a cloud of smoke and flames and he was at the foot of the turret staircase.

"Help! Help!"

The cry came faintly from above. The stairway was almost impassable, masonry was beginning to fall, but Jim did not hesitate. With one arm he shielded his eyes, while his other hand pressed the wet pad more firmly over nose and mouth. He felt

the flames singeing his hair as he fought his way upwards, but still he went on.

Jobson was lying half in and half out of his room, and a falling beam had pinned him by the leg. Jim shifted the beam after a superhuman struggle, but the smoke got into his lungs and eyes, choking and blinding him. He dragged Jobson to the top of the stairs, but retreat by that road was out of the question.

Jim staggered from window to window. At last he found one that opened on to the leads. Just then came the welcome swish of a strong stream of water. The Fire Brigade had arrived at last.

Somehow, but neither of them could ever say afterwards how it was managed, Jim got Jobson through the window and out on to the flat roof. A great cheer greeted their appearance from the crowd of Brankstonians gathered below, but the echo of it reached them only faintly on their high perch.

Jim leaned over the battlements. The firemen were not long in running out a fire escape, and half-a-dozen hoses were playing long streams of water upon the blazing building. Anxiously Jim watched the spidery ladder as it rose slowly through the air towards him. Then his heart almost stopped beating. It had stopped rising now, and the top-most rung was fully twenty feet short of the turret

where they were waiting. Jobson, balanced on one foot at his side, also saw the disaster.

"It's all up with me, Dawson," he said. "I can't climb an inch, for I believe my ankle is broken, but I should think you could get down by the ivy to the top of the ladder. There's no need for both of us to perish. I've been an awful swine to you, Dawson. I'm sorry, and I want to thank you for trying to save me."

"Chuck it, old man!" Jim answered. "We either get down together or not at all. Lend us your wipe, and I'll see if I can fix you."

Jobson produced a handkerchief, but before Jim bound his wrists together he said:

"Dawson, would you mind shaking hands?" And they shook, without any further word said.

A moment later the watchers below caught their breath in a horrified gasp. Jim was climbing out over the battlements, and Jobson was on his back with his arms round his neck.

"Quick! Get that escape to the wall right below them," rapped out the Captain of the Brigade, and then two firemen went clambering up the ladder.

Jock stood there trembling with anxiety, as inch by slow inch Jim lowered himself and his burden down the gnarled old ivy that had clung to the grey stone for a hundred years. One slip, one

loose strand of the evergreen, and he dared not picture what would happen.

An eternity seemed to pass, and then the cheering broke out again, as the waiting firemen received the two boys on to the ladder.

On the last day of term Phil Blake took the chair at the meeting of monitors to elect his successor.

" Well, you fellows," he began, " it's not a particularly pleasant job to meet you all like this for the last time officially, but we've had some jolly good times together, and wherever I go I'll never be happier than I've been at Brankstone. My last duty is to help you to choose the next Head of the School, and all I hope is that you are going to pick upon the man who I feel sure will make a better captain than ever I have been."

Cries of " No ! No ! Impossible ! Good old Phil ! "

" Thank you very much," Blake continued, " but you all know the old tag, ' *Ex Africa semper aliquid novi.*' Jim Dawson came to us out of the wildest parts of Africa, he has certainly shown us a good many new things, and I'm going to propose him as Captain of Brankstone in my place."

Jobson jumped at once to his feet—beating Jock Buchanan by a short head—as the retiring Captain sat down.

"I want to second that," he said quickly, "although I know all you fellows were anxious for the honour of doing it. But, you see, I've behaved pretty badly to Dawson since he came here, and I want to take this means of letting him know that he'll have no more willing follower in Brankstone than I'll be in future. Not only because he saved my life, but because I do recognise him for the jolly fine fellow he is."

That seemed to them all an appropriate signal, and so, in accordance with time-honoured Brankstone custom, they sang "For he's a jolly good fellow" twice through, once for the Captain who had been and once for the Captain who would be, as soon as the Headmaster should have confirmed him in his office.

CHAPTER XIX

AN OLD-TIME ENGLISH CHRISTMAS

Jim had asked Sir Oswald not to send the car over from Dawtry Grange to fetch him until late in the afternoon of breaking-up day, since he wanted to see the last boy out of the old place before he himself left. For the poor unfortunates, who were to stay on as holiday boarders, he had made special plans, and, after consulting with his host, had arranged for them all, no matter whether they were Dagoes or Darkies, to spend Christmas Day at the Grange.

They were Brankstonians, every one of them. He was Captain of the school now, and he wanted all of them to feel that they really belonged to it. Sir Oswald, moreover, had given his whole-hearted approval to the plan and had himself issued the twenty odd invitations.

After the monitors' meeting on the last night of term there had been a riotous supper in Jim's study, given to the boys who were leaving by those who would be their successors in office. There had been songs and reminiscences and all sorts of

jollity, and in the end Jock had been prevailed upon to make night hideous with an imitation of his national music. Then, just as a glorious evening was drawing to a close, Dr. Harvey had dropped in to congratulate Jim upon his election as Head of Brankstone, which would be officially announced at Prayers upon the morrow.

In Big School the next morning Blake had taken Call Over and called the school to attention for the last time as Chief entered, but it was Jim, as the new Captain, who issued the orders to the boys to dismiss and draw their journey money after Prayers were over. Afterwards he had spent the customary half-hour alone with the Headmaster in his study. What passed between them at that interview no one was ever told. But Jim came out smiling, and he had lost his desire to go back to Africa in preference to going on to Oxford from Brankstone.

He saw each of the holiday trains off himself and had a final word with the Doctor who took the last of them.

"Good-bye, Dawson," said Chief. "I shall not see you until next term, although you'll be staying so near Brankstone. I'm off by sea to the South, and I don't suppose I shall get even a letter the whole time I'm cruising. Go to Mr. Stewart if you want anything. He is staying on in charge."

Jim walked back to the school alone to find Sir

Oswald's car awaiting him. Mr. Stewart was at the door of School House.

"I've had an invitation for Christmas Day from Sir Oswald, Jim," he said. "I suppose I've to thank you for that."

"You'll come over, won't you, Padre?" said Jim anxiously.

"I don't see how I can very well help myself," smiled the Reverend Alan, "since you're taking all my flock."

"We are, Padre," grinned Jim, "black sheep and all."

The Reverend Alan laughed, as Jim jumped into the car.

"Well, young Dawson," smiled the old Baronet as his young relative came into the hall. "I was afraid you'd find it rather dull, spending a whole month alone here with only an old man for company, so I've got you a hunter. You ride, of course?"

"Yes, sir," Jim answered. "I've ridden most kind of animals out East, but I don't know how I'll manage the jumping part of the business. There are no hedges or ditches in our part of the world, you know."

Sir Oswald chuckled.

"Don't follow the road brigade," he advised; "you'll stick on all right after you've cut a few voluntaries."

That evening Sir Oswald lingered long over his

port, and Jim listened entranced to tales of the deeds of long dead Dawsons whose portraits hung around the oak-panelled walls of the great dining-room.

A few mornings later when he came down to breakfast dressed ready for hunting, he was surprised to find Sir Oswald booted and spurred and arrayed in pink, for the old fellow was well over seventy, and Jim had never dreamed that he still rode to hounds.

The meet was a new experience for the boy, but as they sat at the edge of a wood waiting for the first of the hounds that was drawing this cover to throw his tongue, all the thrill of the born huntsman, that he had known so well in Africa, came flooding back to Jim. Just for an instant, he wondered if, after all, it was going to be worth while—all this business of going up to Oxford for three long years.

Then suddenly came a whimper, followed a moment later by the crashing music of the pack taking their line. A whip, posted at the far corner of the wood, put up his cap, and then all the world seemed to go mad. Horses plunged, men shouted, and Jim, as he sat down to the first excited bucks of the big grey, saw old Sir Oswald driving his black mare along in an iron grip, sending her forward as she tried to plunge. Jim himself galloped on until he saw the unbroken black line of a thick bull-finch ahead

of him. He did not quite know what to do, but the grey, who had a mouth like iron when he chose, took charge of the situation. The horse dashed on, straight for the big bull-finch, and Jim felt his own heart pumping like a steam piston. The hedge rose high and unbroken, and he must jump it.

The grey dropped to a trot, crouched on his powerful quarters, and rose. Jim rose with him, but he lost both stirrups in the downward swoop and was pitched forward on to the animal's neck. The grey shook him back and strode on, while Jim realised with a sense of elation that his first big jump lay behind.

Strong and untiring, the grey galloped on, playing cup and ball with his rider over hedge and post and rail, which obstacles Jim saw that Sir Oswald and other sportsmen were taking with easy grace.

At last he began to sit up as he got the hang of the thing, and then he discovered that he was close up to the hounds. In that moment he tasted of the real joy of fox-hunting, like which there is no other joy on earth. To feel the ripple and swing of a good horse's muscles was no new experience to him; it was the tremendous lunge over great obstacles that was beginning to grip his imagination.

Presently, hounds dwelt, foiled, and Sir Oswald rode up.

"Well done, young Dawson. That's a grand horse, and you stuck on splendidly over those jumps."

Jim smiled, as he thought how he had dug his nose into the bristles of the grey's hogged mane at the first fence. Before he could reply a hound threw his tongue ; another dashed past him, now another had it, now another ! Sharp eager faces, keen noses close to the wet ground, the pack streamed away again, running hard on a hot scent. Two or three small jumps flashed under his horse's belly, and then Jim caught Sir Oswald's ringing shout :

" Sit tight and drive on, young Dawson."

There was a tall hedge in front, and through it Jim caught the glint of water—water cold and deep and wide. Hounds went into it with a splash and a cloud of spray ; over soared the Master ; over went the first-flighters. One or two went down, and now was the moment when the great, raking, grey horse needed riding with just that knowledge that Jim did not possess. He should have held his mount together and spurred him hard at the jump ; instead he let the willing horse drive on. He shot out, jumping big, and Jim saw the muddy swirl beneath him, but the grey staggered as he landed on the slippery bank and then slid backwards bearing his rider into deep water.

By the time Jim had scrambled to dry land again a fellow sportsman had caught his horse. He threw

himself into the saddle and galloped on again with the water squelching in his boots and draining out of every rag of clothing. Another check, three fields ahead, saved him from losing the hunt, and so he was in at the death when hounds ran into their fox and pulled him down towards mid-day.

"That will do for this time, Jim," suggested Sir Oswald. "I'm getting over old to last out a full day of hard riding, I'm afraid."

Jim made no demur, but he could talk of nothing else but the delights of fox-hunting as they jogged homeward at the steady hound-trot that eats away the miles when the roads are soft and the leaves are off the trees.

The time that followed was a happy one for Jim. Twice or three times a week he hunted, and on the other days there was good shooting, for the Dawtry woods were well preserved. And yet in a way it was a curious time, well qualified to fit Jim for the new world awaiting him later on at Oxford. The quiet dignity of life at the Grange was almost feudal in its simplicity—something entirely different from his previous life at school or in Africa, and different too from his stay at Blent. And all the while Sir Oswald watched him, growing more content each day with the heir who had come to him out of the blue.

With the approach of Christmas and the arrival of Mr. Stewart and the holiday-boarders from Brank-

stone, however, Jim again became the complete schoolboy. The winter had suddenly hardened, and hunting was out of the question. On Christmas Eve the snow lay deep in the lanes and hedgerows, and the ice was inches thick upon the ponds and the lake in the park. Sir Oswald was delighted.

"No difficulty in amusing your young friends in this sort of weather, eh?" he chuckled, as he surveyed the falling barometer. "You must make this your home in future holidays," he said suddenly. "I heard from your father a month ago. Did I tell you that he will probably be home to spend Easter with us?"

"You did not tell me, sir," Jim answered, "but dad just hinted at something of the sort in his last letter. The Christmas mails ought to be in from Africa by now, surely?"

"They are overdue, my boy, but you couldn't expect it to be otherwise. The weather must be simply awful at sea."

Several of the boys who came over from Brankstone on the eve of Christmas had never before visited such an ancient English country home as Dawtry Grange, and were inclined to be shy at first, but Jim carried them all off into the park for a gorgeous snowball fight after luncheon, and they returned to tea with glowing cheeks and their shyness all forgotten.

In the evening there were old-fashioned English Christmas games, such as even the Reverend Alan had only read of in books, but which Sir Oswald well remembered playing in his own far-off youth.

On Christmas morning the whole party went to the little village church, where Sir Oswald read the lessons and Mr. Stewart assisted at the service. Luncheon was a jolly meal, but the real banquet was reserved for the evening, when the Squire had invited several of his neighbours to dine with him.

As midnight was striking they stood in the holly-decked hall and sang "Auld Lang Syne."

"And to-morrow," announced Jim, "we'll toboggan as long as the light lasts, and at night we'll have an illuminated ice carnival on the lake. I've unearthed any number of Chinese lanterns from the box-room."

"May *we* come to the carnival, Sir Oswald?" chorused all the girl guests who had been invited to dinner.

"Ask Jim," chuckled the Squire, "it's his picnic. There will be supper and hot drinks in the hall at ten o'clock, for as many of you as like to come, and a fire to dry yourselves by if you fall in."

"Then that's agreed," said every one.

But the morrow was to bring Jim other things to think about.

CHAPTER XX

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

On Boxing morning the butler, from his post by the breakfast-room window, watched the post-woman as she wended her way slowly across the path.

"Good-morning, Mr. Mepps," she was saying presently. "I suppose I ought really to have brought these letters up on Christmas Eve; but, there, the snow was that deep and there was that much to do at 'ome an' all! I'd ha' brought them yesterday, on'y I ain't allowed to do deliveries on Christmas Day nor Sundays, excep' telegrams."

The butler stopped the garrulous old woman's flow of excuses with a ponderous wave of his plump white hand.

"Give me the mail, *hif* you please, Mrs. 'Uggins."

"Certainly, Mr. Mepps, at once, I'm sure. An' I wishes you a Merry Christmas."

"The Squire will distribute the Christmas boxes himself as usual," remarked the butler, and strode away to sort the parcels and letters.

Jim found a small pile of letters beside his plate when he came to breakfast. The topmost one bore

a Kenya Colony postage stamp and was directed in his father's handwriting. He had never before known his father to write such a long letter. He was about to lay it aside when his eyes suddenly encountered a name which brought a slow, deep flush to his cheeks. He glanced through his other letters, greetings from schoolfellows who had gone home for the holidays mostly, but the full perusal of his letter from Africa he put off until after breakfast.

As soon as the meal was over, the other boys were eager to be off to their tobogganing. Jim said he would join them later and then made his way to Sir Oswald's study.

" Hullo, young Dawson, not going out, eh ? "

" Not just yet, sir. May I come in and read a letter I've got from dad ? "

" Of course. No bad news in it, I hope ? You look worried."

" I don't know yet," Jim answered. " I came here to read it, as I may have to ask your advice. Where shall I sit ? "

" Anywhere you like. What about that big chair by the fire ? "

For the next twenty minutes Jim sat as still as a mouse, for he had to read his father's letter over two or three times before he really realised the true effect of what his father told him.

There was a great deal of local news in the letter

and a very full description of old Bob Dawson's last hunting trip, and so much talk about the ways of big game, rumours of a hitherto undiscovered white pygmy buffalo, which was believed to inhabit the Semliki Forest, and so much about modern transport riding, that Jim saw clearly that his father was evidently sick and tired of owning a prosperous gold mine in safety and was longing for the old wild life and the old wild ways. The boy sympathised fully with his parent, for he, too, had suffered from those same cravings for the open plains, the dark forests, the spacious days and the silent nights many a time and oft since he had come to England and Brankstone. Up to a point that was all very well, and then he came to the part of the letter in which his father did speak of the mine.

"This friend of yours that I told you about," wrote old Bob Dawson, "is a whale of a fellow when it comes to finance and figures, but I'm beginning to wonder if he knows even as much as I do when it comes to a matter of practical mining—gold mining, anyway. Other sorts? Maybe, yes; diamonds, I fancy. Perhaps he's worked on the Rand. There's a reason for my saying that. A while back he came across to my *banda* (hut) and showed me an amazingly fine collection of stones. I asked him where they came from, and he answered that he'd

had them from a *shenzi* (wild native) before he joined up with me here, and that the boy knew a place where the white stones just pop up out of the earth!

" I've heard of these diamond outcrops occurring in Rhodesia and parts of the Kalahari, of course, but no man's ever yet found diamonds in British East Africa, and so I was mighty interested. Well, I couldn't get much out of your pal Short at first " —Jim drew in his breath sharply, as he read that name—" but a few days ago he came along with a tale of how the *shenzi* had turned up one night at his *banda*, and was coming back again soon. Short had got another parcel of stones off the boy, and Pardoe, who was staying with me and knows all about diamonds, pronounced them ' first chop.' Needless to say, Jim boy, I didn't tell *him* how they'd been obtained. But I began to think a lot about the business on the quiet, and when Short came along to ask if he could have three months' leave to go hunting, I said ' No ' pretty quick.

" He's no fool, and he's beginning to realise that I'm not one either. Things went on as usual for another week, and there was I waiting every day for him to come along and hand in his resignation. If he'd done that he could have got pretty well his own terms, especially as his wandering native had been here again. I had that bit of news from M'sharria, who says the *shenzi* looks like a Zulu.

" I've grown mighty keen about this diamond proposition, Jim, and when Short came across with a proposal that we should investigate the business together you can bet that I had both ears and all my brains working at full pressure.

" My first suggestion was that I should finance the expedition and find any other money needed for him to float a company, and that we should go fifty-fifty in the proceeds. That didn't match his notion at all. He's right, of course, about the difficulty of getting the public to subscribe to new ventures, and so perhaps it will be better to take in Kilima Mali and float the two concerns as ' The Central African Gold Mines and Diamond Fields.' That's his idea, anyway, and I've agreed to go halves with him on that basis, after I've seen the place and satisfied myself that the diamonds are really there.

" It means more responsibility, but Short is first-rate on the financial side, and, anyway, I'm glad for your sake, because with a gold mine *and* diamond fields, it looks as if I might be able to leave you best part of a million, Jim boy, when the time comes for me to write ' Kazi kwisha ' (work finished) and hand in my checks.

" Meantime I shall be mighty glad to find myself back in the blue pretty soon. I'm getting a top-hole *safari** together, and we start just before

* Means either a journey, an expedition, or a caravan.

Christmas; in fact, we'll be away by the time this letter reaches you, but where we're going I can't say, for that's the one vital piece of information Short insists upon keeping to himself."

Jim sat still for a long time, considering the news contained in his father's letter. Presently Sir Oswald looked up from the accounts he was going through at his desk.

"Well, young Dawson, do you want my help?"

"I do, sir," Jim answered, and after he had read him what his father had written he explained fully his own and Jock Buchanan's dealings with Fineson-Short, and the mistake he himself had made in believing that it was Leif Bateson, the famous engineer, whom his father had taken on to help him with the management of the mine.

"I see," said the Squire, when Jim had finished, "and you think this chap, Fineson-Short, will try to double-cross your father in some way or another?"

"I'm sure of it," Jim answered hotly. "He's playing for safety anyhow, because he gets a half share in Kilima Mali if he can convince dad about the diamonds, and he's sharp enough to do that, whether there really is a diamond field or not."

"But how could he hope to convince your father if the diamonds are not there?"

"There will be *some* diamonds, of course; but

you don't know how clever chaps like Fineson-Short are at ' salting ' the ground. That Zulu boy he's in with, too ! He probably knows all about such things. I suspect Short got him up from Jo'burg or Kimberley on purpose. And don't you see how clever Short has been ? Dad would never suspect him, since he turned up in Africa as a friend of mine."

" H'm ! Well, you'd better send a cable. There's just a chance that the expedition may have been held up, or that some one will be able to send a message after your father. Meanwhile, we'd better not say anything about this business until we get a reply."

And so a cable was sent to " The Acting-Manager, Kilima Mali Mine," and on the morrow back came an answer, " *Safari* already started. Destination unknown."

" Now we had better consult Mr. Stewart," suggested Sir Oswald, when he had read the cable.

At first the Reverend Alan could not see that there was anything at all that they could do in the matter. Jim, however, held different views.

" There's only one thing for it, Padre," he urged. "I'll have to go back to Africa and follow my father."

" But everything will have been settled long before you could get there, Jim."

" I don't think so," Jim argued. " In his letter dad says that Short asked for three months' leave to go hunting. In other words, he probably needed

a month or six weeks to get to the place the *shenzi* native had told him of, and say a week there to satisfy himself about the diamonds. He would reckon on his *safari* travelling faster on the return journey, as they would be trekking back along their own trail."

" I wouldn't bank too much on that calculation," chipped in Sir Oswald. " Fineson-Short may have asked for that leave just to throw dust in your father's eyes and to make him more keen about helping to locate this mythical diamond field."

" Then you agree, sir, that I ought to go back and try to find dad, before that scoundrel has persuaded him to sign away half our interest in Kilima Mali ? " said Jim eagerly.

The Squire looked quizzically from the boy to the master.

" Who's *in loco parentis*, you or I, Stewart ? " he smiled.

" You can take the responsibility if you want it, Sir Oswald."

"Very well. You're in charge of Brankstone during the Headmaster's absence abroad, I understand ? "

" Yes."

" Good. Do you feel inclined to let young Dawson go to Africa and to give him permission to be absent from school until, shall we say, half term ? He'll get back earlier if possible."

The Padre temporised instead of answering the question at once.

"He can't go alone," he protested.

"I won't admit that," said Sir Oswald, "but I agree that it would be better for him not to do so. Have you any suggestion to make, Jim?"

Jim had been thinking furiously, and his course seemed rather doubtful.

"I might pick up a man who knows about diamonds at Mombasa or Nairobi," he suggested.

"That's no good. We've got to find our expert and send him with you, or I shall be having Dr. Harvey over to see me when he gets back. When does the first boat sail?"

"Saturday," Jim answered instantly, for he had already looked up the sailings and calculated the earliest possible moment he could reach Africa.

"Saturday, eh? And to-day's Monday. How are we to get hold of a good man in the time?"

The Reverend Alan shook his head. He had no suggestions to offer. But, suddenly, like a flash of lightning inspiration came to Jim.

"Leif Bateson!" he cried.

"The very man," agreed Sir Oswald.

"If he's in England," added Mr. Stewart. "How can we find out?"

"He told me if ever I wanted to get in touch with him to try the Wanderers' Club," Jim volunteered.

Sir Oswald reached for the London Telephone Directory, and put through a long-distance call. Presently he was connected with the famous club. Jim's face fell as he heard him echo :

" Not there, eh ? Are you expecting him ? "

The Squire, however, was smiling as he hung up the receiver.

" We're all right—if he'll take it on," he announced. " He's due back to-morrow from South America."

" Had I better go up to London to make sure of catching him ? " queried Jim.

"No, I'll write and ask him to wire me. If there's no answer by noon we must take other steps."

In the middle of the following morning, however, the much-hoped-for telegram arrived, and was followed on Tuesday evening by Leif Bateson himself. He listened attentively to Jim's story, and his expression became more and more serious as the tale progressed.

" I don't like it at all," he said at last. " It's my opinion that Fineson-Short got out of England because he has made this country a bit too hot to hold him. I know for a fact that he let Mr. Holland in pretty badly, and several other people he met at Blent as well. I'm pretty well up in diamond mining, of course, but I've never been North of the Zambezi, so you'll have to lead the expedition and

boss the natives, Jim, since you speak the lingo and know the country."

"You're coming, then?" cried Jim, his face aglow.

"Oh, yes, I'm coming! For one thing, this country's a sight too cold for my liking at present. Besides," he added, with a broad grin, "it'll save me all the bother of unpacking the tropical outfit I've brought home with me from the Amazon. But you'll need some kit. We shall have to see about that at once, and our steamer reservations, too, if we are to sail on Saturday."

"All that must be my concern," interposed Sir Oswald, and added, turning to Jim, "Off you go and look after your guests. Mr. Stewart is taking them back to Brankstone to-morrow, you know."

The Reverend Alan slipped his hand within Jim's arm as they walked along the corridor leading from the study to the hall.

"I take it that tale was told—er—under the seal of the confessional, Jim?" he queried.

"How do you mean, Padre?"

"Well, I'd never heard about the visit you and Buchanan paid to Fineson-Short in London, for example."

"Good heavens! I'd forgotten for the moment that you are a schoolmaster!" exploded Jim.

"I think, all things considered, I'd better forget

it too upon this very special occasion and in the peculiar circumstance," smiled the Reverend Alan.

" Padre, you're a brick," said Jim, and gave the master's arm an affectionate squeeze.

Back in the study Sir Oswald and Leif Bateson were beginning to go into details.

" You gave young Dawson a pat on the back about leading the expedition," suggested Sir Oswald.

" Not a bit of it," replied the engineer. " He knows the natives and will probably manage them a great deal better than I should. Besides, I've been in one scrap already with that young fellow, and I tell you he's most infernally adequate."

" I'm glad you think so. And now what about fees and expenses ? "

" Never mind about fees, Sir Oswald. I know Bob Dawson well by repute, and I'll gamble on his giving me a corner in Kilima Mali, if we pull this business through. But the expenses won't be light. There's Jim's kit to start with ; fares will come to three or four hundred, and then there is the *safari* to get together and fit out."

" Will a thousand be enough to start with ? You can have more if you want, or you can cable me your needs."

" If you'd let me have five hundred pounds to get us out to Africa, and enough credit for another five hundred pounds in Jim's name and mine at the

Standard Bank of South Africa, I think that should see us through, for I make a practice of carrying a good wad of notes of my own on an expedition of this kind. All sorts of things crop up, and one can often do a good bit of business if one has the ready cash in hand. I've all the weapons I need, and I expect Jim will pick his own stuff up when we get to his father's place. It might be a good thing for him to cable to the acting-manager of the mine to get together a *safari*. That would save at least a week when we get there. Good carriers are always hard to find, and it's generally a job to get the right sort of food to suit them. Where natives are concerned it's no exaggeration to say that 'one's man's meat is another man's poison,' for the sort of grub that suits the men of one tribe hardly ever agrees with those of another."

Sir Oswald crossed to his desk and wrote out a cheque for five hundred pounds.

"You can cash that in London to-morrow, Bateson," he said. "I will arrange about the balance. I suppose the Standard Bank has branches all over East Africa?"

"Yes," answered Leif Bateson, "but I'll drop into the head office in London during the week and find out exactly where they have established branches."

The rest of that week was one wild, exciting rush for Jim, and on Saturday they sailed.

CHAPTER XXI

BACK INTO THE BLUE

THE Red Sea lay far behind ; the long, low coast-line to the right was Africa. Rock and sand had given place to luxuriant green foliage, and soon the big steamer was making its way past the white houses and the old Arab fort at Mombasa.

Jim, perched far up in the bows with Leif Bateson beside him, pointed out each familiar land-mark as it came in sight. Deep woods engulfed the ship as she turned to sta'board, nosing for the deep, sheltered waters of Kilindini Harbour. Jim cried out with pleasure as his eyes lit upon that most familiar landmark to all wanderers returning to East Africa, the ancient Arab watch-tower that still leans drunkenly sideways and yet is always there—still standing when one comes back to the magic shores.

" Glory be, but it's good to be home again ! "

Jim spoke with wholehearted fervour, and Leif Bateson smiled understandingly as the chains ran out with a roar and the great anchor plunged through deep blue water to sandy bottom.

Nothing was changed and everything was good, thought Jim, as they were transported on the same old-time, hand-propelled trolley-trucks from Kilindini to Mombasa. The people he knew were still at the Metropole Hotel, and even the furniture in his bedroom was exactly the same as he remembered it the last time he had stayed there with his father.

Jim waited only long enough to throw the keys of his tin box to the native boy he had engaged as a personal servant upon landing; then he went downstairs to join Bateson. As he passed the open door of the hotel bar on his way to the lounge, a cheery voice hailed him. A moment later he was shaking hands with Guy Hamilton. They had served together with the East African Mounted Rifles in the great fight at Lon-gido years before. Then Hamilton had gone on to the King's African Rifles to end up the war as a major with all sorts of decorations. Now he was a professional big-game hunter and had come down to Mombasa to meet a party of English sportsmen who had come out after lion and elephant.

"I didn't expect to see you back so soon, Jim," he volunteered, after their first greetings were over. "When I saw your father just after Christmas he told me that you were firmly settled in England for another three or four years."

" Where did you see the old man just after Christmas, Guy ? "

" In D.S.M., of course."

" In Dar-es-Salaam ? What the dickens was he doing down there ? "

" That's what all of us wanted to know. He's got some special stunt on, and mighty mysterious he was about it, by that same token. Might almost be on the trail of another gold mine, he was so secretive."

" Any one with him ? "

" Yes, a fellow I didn't much care about. Forget his name, though. They were getting together a small *safari*, but it was impossible to find out where they were going, or what they were after."

" Thanks, old man," said Jim quietly. " I fancy you've saved me a pretty long trek."

Leif Bateson was of the same opinion when he heard Jim's news.

The *Ngoma* was sailing the next morning, and aboard her they went down to the beautiful ex-German sea-port, which had begun to lose its trade to Tanga even before the War. Now Jim found the place sleepier and more placid than ever.

" Where do we start asking for information ? " queried Bateson, as they went ashore. " Is there any responsible official who'd be likely to tell us anything ? "

" I'd rather try the Burgher Hotel myself," Jim answered, and hailed a ricksha to take them to the Unter den Akasien.

Neither at the Burgher nor the Africa Hotel, however, was any information forthcoming, beyond the facts that Hunter Dawson and his friend had stayed a week at the first and had held meetings with various people at the second.

After dinner that night Jim slipped out alone into the velvety darkness and took the old Carrier Corps road out of the town. Presently he came to a low, square-built hut, through the thin grass walls of which the light of a smouldering fire showed redly.

" *Hodi!* " he called, and waited for the answer " *Karibu sana!* " which is the Swahili equivalent for " Come in ! "

The face of the man crouched above the glowing embers was in shadow, but Jim knew him for a very old man.

" I see you, Kapambarra," he said conventionally.

" I see you, son of my master ! " came the equally conventional reply.

" You have news of my father, Kapambarra ? "

" Te he ! " chuckled the old native. " Te he ! He went into the wilderness a moon and a moon ago. Who shall say what the wilderness hath done with that which the wilderness hath taken ? "

Jim squatted down on his heels and looked at the native across the fire. He knew this exasperating game of question and answer, and the dreary length of it, of old. For an hour and a half they chaffered, the native edging always away from the issue, and the boy dragging him relentlessly back to it and pinning him to a point at last. Jim rose with an ill-concealed sigh of relief.

"You say that Pesambli is here in Dar-es-Salaam, Kapambarra?"

"He *was* here yesterday," the exasperating old man admitted, with a fine show of grudging caution.

Jim felt more inclined to give the man a taste of his stick than to hand over the three rupees he had drawn from his pocket.

"If Pesambli brings to me to-morrow morning the news I am seeking, I'll double this amount," he said, as he dropped the money into the eagerly outstretched hand.

Jim awoke the next morning to find his father's former servant squatting imperturbable at the foot of his bed. Pesambli sprang to his feet as the young master opened his eyes. He was overjoyed to see Jim, but no sign of any emotion, even for an instant, disturbed the serenity of his clean-cut ebony features. The man had been with Mr. Dawson for years as his personal servant, and Jim

knew that there was no necessity to ask him anything more than the necessary questions.

"Where is Mwinda?" he asked briefly, using the Swahili nick-name of "The Hunter," by which the natives called his father.

"I do not know, Bwana" (master).

"What has happened?"

"We were on *safari* beyond Linatoga. The Bwana Short sent me back to our last camp for a hunting knife he had left behind. In a dark part of the forest something fell upon me, striking me down, stunned. When I awoke I was far from the path we had followed."

"Why didn't you rejoin the *safari*?"

"Bwana, I could not find the road. I was ill for days; but I had money, and so I made for the railway and came back to wait here."

Jim lay silent for a long time, thinking deeply. Presently Pesambli spoke again.

"Bwana," he said, "it is a strange *safari* that Mwinda leads. The caravan-porters are of the Children of Cetewayo."

"Zulus, eh?" exclaimed Jim. "What are they doing so far north of their own country?"

"I don't know, Bwana. But they take their orders from Bwana Short's boy."

"What says Mwinda to that?"

" I think, Bwana, that Mwinda waits. He knows that all is not well."

Jim got out of bed and took some money from the dressing-table.

" Pay off the ' boy ' I engaged yesterday, Pesambli. You can look after me until my father needs your services again."

Presently Jim went downstairs to find Leif Bateson already at breakfast.

" We've got to travel fast and light," he announced when he had imparted the tale he had heard from Pesambli. " I think we had better take the railway as far as possible, trust to luck that we shall be able to pick up half-a-dozen caravan porters to carry out bare necessaries, and strike right across country to Linatoga. We ought to be able to hit my father's trail from there."

CHAPTER XXII

A PLAN IS MADE

For two days Leif Bateson and Jim endured in patience, sleeping in spasms, eating without appetite, and hardly speaking at all, as the train wound its slow way through the tropical belt which stretches inland from the coast. Hour by hour the mercury crept up in the thermometer to mark a higher temperature, and such puffs of air as blew in through the open, mosquito-netting protected windows were as hot and evil-tasting as a blast from the mouth of a volcano. Leif Bateson had experienced heat in his time, for he was no stranger to the tropics, but this was past anything that he had ever been called upon to endure previously.

"Do you mean to tell me," he asked more than once, "that you fellows actually marched *and* fought in this atmosphere during the War?"

"You wait until you see the leeches," was Jim's cryptic answer. "It was bad enough for those of us who had lived all our lives in Africa. The people I was really sorry for were the young officers and

sergeants who came out from home. They were worse off than the London Royal Fusiliers really, because most of the chaps in that battalion had seen previous service in the Legion of Frontiersmen."

"What sort of fighting was it?" asked Bateson curiously.

"Sharp, hand-to-hand stuff with the bayonet very often," Jim answered. "You were liable to bump into the Bosche without warning. I've known hostile columns pass each other within a few hundred yards without knowing it."

With such short conversations, dozing and day-dreaming, the hours stole by until at last the long journey was ended, and they came on the second evening to Mavagoro. The "hotel" was little better than a big grass hut, but they were grateful for the shade of the deep thatched roof.

Next morning Bateson strolled off to buy half-a-dozen firearms of any pattern that might be procurable. Jim took Pesambli to help him to find suitable caravan porters.

"We'll take half-a-dozen Wanyamezi and arm them, if they are to be found," said Jim, "and a dozen Kavirondos to carry the loads."

They recruited the men they wanted without much difficulty, and Jim appointed a headman over them, a Mnyamezi, named Assimani, who had held the rank of sergeant in the German forces, in which

his five fellow Wanyamezi also had served. Assimani was a sturdily-built, steadfast-looking fellow, who carried himself very erect. Jim liked the way he looked him straight in the eyes and the clean cut of his firm mouth, beneath a broad negro nose and high cheek-bones. It was a real fighting face, and Jim knew that he had found a man who would stand by his master to the bitter end.

Back at the hotel Bateson was waiting with the armoury he had collected. It comprised one short Lee-Enfield rifle, two Schneiders, an elephant-gun, and a couple of flint-locks, and—wonder of wonders—a derelict German machine-gun and half-a-dozen belts of cartridges. Assimani patted the jacket of the machine-gun affectionately and chuckled deeply from his chest, the most contagious laugh one can imagine. It was evident that he was no stranger to the use of the deadly weapon.

Next morning they took the bush track to Linatoga, Jim leading with Pesambli, Leif Bateson and Assimani shepherding the rear of the little caravan. That stage of the journey presented no difficulties, for they were following one of the old, well-worn roads, along which the unhappy slave caravans had been driven from the interior to the coast in the bad old days.

At Kahenga, a day's march beyond Linatoga, they got news of Hunter Dawson's *safari*, and the jungle

swallowed them up. Bateson now began to realise the significance of Jim's warning to him to "wait until he saw the leeches." Blood-sucking ticks he had got used to already, but a more painful nip than any he had yet endured drew his attention to his legs, which were bare from the top of his puttees to the ends of his shorts. In brushing through some long grass he had collected two or three small grey-green leeches, which were rapidly swelling as they sucked.

Assimani grinned as he saw the white man's look of horror.

"Do not touch them, Bwana," he warned; "they will drop off when they are full."

For a week they tramped onwards, drawing each day nearer to a great range of mountains, at first softly blue and indefinite in the distance, but of overwhelming majesty and might when viewed at closer quarters.

Jim had long since explained to Assimani the purpose of the expedition, and from the last camp among the foot-hills the Mnyamezi went off on his own to make a reconnaissance. When he returned he brought a diminutive Pygmy hunter with him. The little chap knew where the camp of the other white men was located, and was willing to guide them to it.

"Ask him if they've been digging, Assimani,"

ordered Jim, for he could not himself manage the clicks and cluckings which make up the language of the Pygmies and the Bushmen.

At the end of five minutes of linguistic fireworks Assimani announced that first a party of strange natives had arrived and had dug in a certain spot for several days, leaving all, apparently, as they had found it in the end. Then, after several moons, more strange natives, but undoubtedly of the same tribe as the others, and with them two white men, had arrived and again dug up the ground where the others had dug already. The first digging had been made in silence ; the second to the accompaniment of many outcries and exclamations of joy from the white men.

" That's almost plain enough for a blind man to see or a deaf man to understand, eh, Jim ? " said Bateson. " It looks as if the first party was sent up specially to ' salt ' the ground."

Jim sat silent for some moments.

" Ask him the strength of the other camp, Assimani," he ordered.

" It is a big *safari*, Bwana Jim," came the answer. " There are a hundred natives, and they are well armed."

That night Jim and his companion sat late discussing their plans. At last it was agreed that Bateson should go up on the morrow with

Assimani, appearing to run across the other camp by accident. He was then to endeavour to find out if the discovery of diamonds was genuine or not, and in the event of their suspicions proving correct he was to try to get Hunter Dawson away.

" You see," said Jim, " if I put in an appearance Fineson-Short will know the game is up. On the other hand he knows you for a mining expert, will not suspect you of having come out to find my father, and can hardly prevent him from asking your opinion when he is told who you are. Once we get the old man into this camp I fancy we ought to be able to handle the situation easily enough."

CHAPTER XXIII

A COUNTER PLOT

In a small *safari* tent, pitched beneath the shade of a big baobab tree, Hunter Dawson and Fineson-Short sat, one at either side of a folding table. A small sack of uncut diamonds lay between them, and a document was spread out before the hunter. Fineson-Short's eyes were eager, and he held in his fingers a fountain-pen, ready to pass it to his companion when he had finished reading the paper.

"Yes, that seems to be all in order," said Bob Dawson presently, "but wouldn't it be better to complete the agreement when we get back to civilisation and can do so before a lawyer and with proper witnesses?"

"There's no need to wait," urged the other. "I had that agreement drawn up by a lawyer before we started. Africa *is* Africa, you know. We might either of us be killed, or die, before we get back to Dar-es-Salaam."

"And you'd lose your share in Kilima Mali if I went out, eh, Short?"

"I suppose so."

"Would that matter? You'd have the diamond field all to yourself then."

"That's true, but I'd have to find all the capital to float the company."

Mr. Dawson thought a moment.

"Right-ho! I'll sign this agreement if you wish."

Fineson-Short, with difficulty, suppressed a sigh of satisfaction and relief as he passed the pen across the table. But before the ink had stained the paper a native appeared at the tent opening.

"There's a white man coming to the camp, Baas," he announced.

Hunter Dawson dropped the pen and sprang eagerly to his feet. When two white men have been alone together in the wilderness for weeks on end, no matter how well they may like each other, the arrival of any one else of their own colour is always a welcome event. But when Fineson-Short saw and recognised Bateson, the pleasure of making the stranger welcome was confined entirely to Hunter Dawson.

Bateson showed well-simulated signs of surprise at the sight of Short, but the moment he had been introduced to Hunter Dawson he turned his eyes to the small sack of stones upon the table and contrived to twist his features into a rueful expression.

" It looks as though you fellows have forestalled me," he said dolefully.

" Forestalled you, eh ? How's that ? " queried Bob Dawson.

" There are rumours, even down in South Africa, that a new diamond field is awaiting discovery up here. I was engaged to make investigation. But it seems as though I'm a day behind the fair. I'm assuming, Mr. Dawson, that neither you nor Short brought those uncut stones along with you ? "

Fineson-Short shot a venomous glance at the engineer.

" We discovered them," he said sharply, " and we've established first claim to the diamond field."

" My dear fellow, I'm not disputing that. Do you mind if I have a look at the stones ? I'm a bit of an expert, as you probably know."

Fineson-Short might have refused, but Hunter Dawson had already picked up the bag and now handed it to Bateson. The financier was not, however, unduly worried, for he was quite certain that the stones could not be faulted. A curious smile crept slowly to Bateson's lips, and, although he admitted that the diamonds were excellent specimens, Mr. Dawson had an uneasy feeling that the expert was not altogether satisfied with them.

" You're quite sure that they're all right then ? "

he queried anxiously, and added, " I watched every one of them dug out of the blue clay."

Bateson started.

" In blue clay, were they ? Well, well ! Oh, yes, they're excellent stones ! What's the hunting like in these parts ? I may as well have a go at big game before I trek back. There's nothing else for me to do, as you've already located the diamond field."

This time Fineson-Short found it even harder to repress an exclamation of satisfaction. He wondered how on earth Bateson had got wind of the " find." Perhaps Umbelazi, his Zulu head-boy, had talked when he went South to get the blue clay. It did not, however, matter, since Bateson apparently had already dismissed the matter from his mind.

A diversion was caused by some native servants appearing with lunch. Hunter Dawson folded up the still unsigned agreement and slipped it into his pocket. Bateson was watching for an opportunity to give him a word of warning, but Fineson-Short never left them alone together for an instant.

Towards evening Bateson got up from his chair and stretched himself.

" You fellows care to stroll over to my camp for a ' sundowner ' ? " he queried.

Bob Dawson was eager to go, but Short hung back for a moment to speak to a native who had just

come in from the bush. He had taken the " boy " on as personal servant at Kilima Mali. The man knew Jim and would have told Mr. Dawson that his son was close at hand had not Short heard the tale first and forbidden the native to pass it on. As he crossed the camp to where the others were waiting he paused to whisper an order to Umbelazi. The Zulu gave a quick nod of understanding.

" We may as well sign that agreement and Bateson can witness it before we go," Short suggested boldly, as he joined the others.

" Where's the hurry ? " Bob Dawson answered. " This is good elephant country, and Bateson and I are going to have at least a week's hunting together before we break camp. After that, we might combine the two *safaris* and all go down country together, eh, Bateson ? "

" That will suit me excellently," agreed the engineer.

Fineson-Short offered no objection, but then he had already made his plans. They moved off through the open bush by which the two camps were separated from one another. As they went on the density of the undergrowth increased and within a quarter of an hour they were walking in single file along a tunnel-like track that successive generations of rhinos had used from time immemorial. Leif

Bateson was ahead, following Assimani, then came Hunter Dawson, and behind him Fineson-Short.

Just as they came to a small open glade Assimani stopped dead, one hand stretched out behind him to check Bateson. Hunter Dawson froze in mid-step and put his foot down silently as he caught the word the native hissed :

" *Nyati !* "

It meant buffalo, and both Bateson and the hunter knew that they were close to the one animal of all the African big-game creatures which is more dangerous than either the lion, the elephant, or the rhinoceros. For a moment they hesitated ; then came a snort, the thunder of hoofs and a terrible cry. Bob Dawson swung round, and the crash of his rifle sounded like a clap of thunder in that confined space. The buffalo went down, but Fineson-Short was underneath him. Then pandemonium broke loose. There were other buffaloes behind the fallen beast, and apparently the rest of the herd had been grazing in the glade just ahead.

" Quick, *wabwana*, to the trees ! " shouted Assimani, and a moment later all three of them were clinging among the prickly thorn tops.

They had escaped death by a miracle as the herd swept down upon them, and both white men had dropped their rifles in their frantic scramble to comparative safety.

" And how long we'll have to stay here Heaven alone knows," said Hunter Dawson, as he peered down through the branches.

For the herd had closed in round the tree trunk, wet, grey muzzles raised and eyes and horns gleaming in the red evening light. And buffaloes, once they have treed a man, have an awkward habit of waiting patiently until he drops from the branches in which he has taken refuge from sheer exhaustion.

" I think we shall be rescued before it gets quite dark," volunteered Leif Bateson, and then amazed his companion by telling him that Jim was waiting in the camp they had been on their way to visit, but the rest of the story he kept to himself, because he wanted Jim to have the pleasure of relating it to his father.

Had he known how persistently a herd of buffalo will worry away at a frail thorn tree until they have got it down, he might have been tempted to speak. As it was he contented himself with wondering whether Fineson-Short was alive or dead.

Not a mile away Umbelazi and a hundred Zulu warriors lay waiting.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE END OF A BAD MAN

That day had passed like a nightmare to Jim. He could not shoot for obvious reasons. He dared not go near the diggings, which the little Pygmy hunter would have shown him, and in the camp there was nothing to do. Hour after hour he brooded, wondering if the plan that he and Leif Bateson had adopted was a wise one. Would the engineer succeed in getting his father away from that other camp without any fuss? Would he even come back safely himself?

Jim thought and thought. Finally he decided that any plan, other than the one they had devised, must have proved hopeless. Fineson-Short had, under his command, a hundred warriors of one of the finest fighting races in the world. It is all very well to say that the Children of Cetewayo are a broken people, since the English troops stamped flat the great *kraal* at Ulundi, that their warriors have degenerated into ricksha boys and servants. All that may be true, but a nation that has ruled its

world for hundreds of years does not lose its powers entirely in a single generation, and, given leadership, the Zulu warrior is still of the same fierce fighting stock as his forefathers, who lorded it over all Natal only fifty years ago.

Against such a force Jim knew that his handful of half-a-dozen Wanyamezi would have no chance, except in a strong, defensive position, or unless they could take them by surprise. For then the German machine-gun and the rifles he had brought along with his *safari* would stand them in excellent stead.

Towards night-fall he summoned to his tent Pesambli and a Mnyamezi, called Simba, who had held non-commissioned rank in the German forces during the war.

"Is there among you, Simba, any man, save Assimani, who can shoot with the gun that laughs Ha! Ha! Ha!?" he queried.

"I am that man, Bwana," Simba answered simply.

"Good! The other men have their rifles. Pesambli, choose half-a-dozen men from the Kavirondo to act as gun-porters and ammunition carriers. You yourself can have Simba's rifle. We will go and see what is happening at the other camp."

Ten minutes later the porters took up their loads at Jim's command "*Bandika!*" Then they set off towards the other camp, which they could just hope to reach before the swift African darkness shut down.

Now this story might have had an entirely different ending but for the circumstance that the Amazulu are a superstitious and highly imaginative people. As Umbelazi and his followers crouched in the undergrowth, where Fineson-Short had bidden them await the coming of Mwinda and the strange white man and then make an end, the daylight faded, and the long-drawn-out, horrible whine of prowling hyenas echoed through the bush.

The black warriors shifted uneasily and began to mutter among themselves. At length a speaker, more bold than the rest, put a match to the tinder of their superstitious fear, as a cry, nearer and louder than any that had preceded it, reached them.

" *That* was not the voice of any hyena," said the man ; " *that* was the very cry of an *esedowan* itself."

A shudder of horror ran through the closely-packed ranks, so that bundles of assegais rattled against ox-hide shields, like the tall stems in a bamboo brake when the wind is rising. The *esedowan* is a mythical beast of Zulu legend, believed to carry off people in a hole in its back. For the poison of fear the native knows only one antidote ; it is slaughter.

" We will go," said Umbelazi, " to this other camp and kill whomsoever we may find there, and there we will await the coming of the white man, whom we have been ordered to kill. But, remember, Mwinda is to be taken alive."

Jim, moving through the bush northwards, with the machine-gun and porters, had thrown out his four Wanyamezi well ahead of his little convoy to act as a screen of scouts, for he knew the value of early and accurate information in bush warfare. Presently, as he halted to rest the porters upon the rocky bank of a river, which they must ford, his scouts came dashing in.

" Bwana," said one, " there is a big force coming towards us. They sing a war-chant softly as they march, and as softly beat their spears against their shields."

" Site that gun, Simba ! " Jim ordered grimly. " The rest of you get to cover."

They had not long to wait before the Zulus broke cover and began to cross an open space towards the river. Jim got to his feet and hailed them in Swahili. An excited but unintelligible babble answered him, and so he tried them in English.

Umbelazi understood that language, and stated insolently that he and his men intended crossing the water and that it would be the worse for any one who tried to stop them. Jim's nostrils flickered in and out in the peculiar trick he had when he was angry.

" No one comes to this bank of the stream to-night," he snapped.

Then he ducked swiftly as the last rays of the sun flashed back blood-red from the broad blade of an

assegai as it whistled towards him. In a moment the air was thick with throwing spears, and still Simba waited.

" Hold your fire," Jim ordered. " They'll charge in a minute, and then we've got them."

It was as he said, for the stuttering machine-gun and the snapping rifles mowed red lanes through the onrushing warriors. For perhaps ten minutes they stuck it and then turned tail and fled, the Wanyamezi firing vengefully after them, until the last glistening brown back had been swallowed up in the dense bush.

On they tore, that panic-stricken host, heedless of clutching thorns and the whip of swishing branches —on and on, until at last they burst into the glade where Hunter Dawson and his two companions were still perched wearily waiting in the prickly top of their thorn tree.

The long-horned, big-bossed heads of the terrible buffaloes swung round to meet this new onslaught, and then befell a tragedy unprecedented even in the unexpected which is Africa. For the herd, as if moved by a single motive, charged down upon the terrified Zulus, and, although here a man and there a group strove to stem the torrent with stabbing assegai and crushing knob-kerry, it was all to no purpose, and barely a dozen men escaped alive from that blood-stained shambles.

" By heavens ! " said Hunter Dawson, as they left their tree at last. " I've known Africa as a land of amazing happenings for nearly forty years, but I never saw anything like that in all my life."

" It was horrible, horrible," shuddered Bateson. " What about Fineson-Short ? "

They found him, crushed beneath the buffalo that Hunter Dawson had killed, and it was evident that the financier had died swiftly, for the bull's horn must have pierced him from back to front, as it charged down upon them from behind. There was nothing to be done but to leave him where he lay, for it would have been impossible to carry the body through that dense bush by themselves to either one camp or the other.

" We will make for my camp, I think," said Bateson, but he did not yet explain the reason for his suggestion.

Half-an-hour later they came to the river where Jim and his men were waiting.

CHAPTER XXV

ALL PROBLEMS SOLVED

At first Hunter Dawson was incredulous when they told him that the diamond field was nothing more than a gigantic hoax, engineered by Fineson-Short for the purpose of getting for himself a half share in the Kilima Mali gold mine.

" But," he protested, "they are diamonds, and I myself saw them dug out of the blue clay in which diamonds are found. What evidence have you that the men the Pygmy hunter saw digging were not the ' boys ' of another party of prospectors, or even wandering natives searching for water ? "

Bateson smiled patiently.

" We can't actually prove that Fineson-Short planted either the clay or the diamonds," he said. " If the clay is a genuine feature of this part of the country we might, even yet, strike riches ; it's the diamonds you saw dug up that tell their own story."

" But you said the stones are genuine ! "

" They're genuine enough, as diamonds."

" Well, then ? "

" But they're not African diamonds. Those stones

you secured first saw the light of day in Australia. Any expert could tell you that."

A final investigation of the diggings themselves proved that the extent of the blue clay deposit was extremely limited, no more stones were found, and in the end Mr. Dawson had to admit that he had been hoodwinked.

Stores were plentiful and the African season at its best, and so they put in a fortnight's big game hunting before they finally led their *safari* coastwards. During that month a genuine friendship sprang up between the old hunter and Leif Bateson. Jim watched its growth with infinite satisfaction ; but he said no word of the plan he had made until they were back once more in the Burgher Hotel at Dar-es-Salaam.

One evening, as they sat in the lounge, sipping their coffee after dinner, Hunter Dawson turned to his son.

" I've been thinking, Jim, that we might as well abandon this business of you going back to school and up to Oxford," he volunteered. " It seems to me that I want you out here to help me to manage the mine."

" Six months ago, dad, I'd have jumped at that offer," Jim answered. " But I'm neither fit nor ready to help you yet. Let me go back to England and finish the job you gave me. Let me really learn my job, and then I'll come back to you just as fast as ever I can."

" That's all very well," grumbled the hunter,

" but you've deprived me of my manager, scoundrel though he was, and I've no taste for trusting another stranger, and still less fancy for trying to run the show entirely on my own."

" Then why not trust a friend, dad ? " smiled Jim.

" A friend ? Who ? "

" Leif Bateson, of course."

Bob Dawson swung round and dropped his hand on the engineer's shoulder.

" Would you do it, Bateson ? " he cried.

" There's nothing I'd like better. Will you let me buy a small interest ? "

" Buy nothing," snapped old Bob. " You and Jim, between you, saved me from making a fool of myself ; in fact, you may have saved my life. If you're coming to Kilima Mali you're coming as a fourth share partner. Is that good enough ? "

" You bet your life it is."

" Right, then, that's settled."

And so, a few days later, Jim set sail once more for England, but as the low green African coast faded to a blur upon the horizon he seemed to hear the echo of old Pesambli's anxious shout :

" *Kwa heri, Bwana ! Utarudisha bado kidogo ?* "
(Good-bye, master. You will come back soon ?)

" Yes," Jim muttered, as he turned away, " I'll come back, but four years is an awfully long time."

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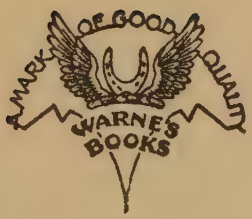
Oh. for a booke and a shadie nooke,
Eyther in-a-dorre or out;
With the grene leaves whisp'ring overhede,
Or the streete cryes all about.
Where I maie reade all at my ease,
Both of the newe and olde;
For a jollie goode booke whereon to looke
Is better to me than golde.

Old Rhyme.



Publications of
FREDERICK WARNE & Co. LTD., LONDON & NEW YORK

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR E. R. G. R. EVANS, K.C.B., D.S.O.

THE EXILE

Noel Howard, son of Admiral Sir John Howard, had to flee the country because of the plotting of his rascally Russian cousin, Ivan Shermann, who faked a strong charge of murder against him. Even then Ivan's hatred was not satisfied, and he pursued his cousin through France, Belgium, Russia, and at last to Norway, where Noel had his final reckoning. The long exile over, Noel was able to return to his Devon home, in time to join Nelson's navy, preparing for the last tussle with the French. A finely-written and unusual story by one who loves and understands the sea.

(*Published in the All Time Library*)

NOEL HOWARD, MIDSHIPMAN

In this thrilling story of the sea, Noel Howard, the red-haired, snub-nosed Devon lad, becomes a Midshipman in the Navy, in the days when Nelson was hurling his ships against the French. Fights with French frigates and men-of-war, cutting out expeditions, adventures in the Spanish Main, and finally, in escaping from his French captors, a journey across unknown Africa, make up a stirring tale. But it is something more than a tale of adventure; it is an authentic picture of the life in the Navy in the hazardous days of sail; and through it runs what the Author calls "the clear fresh call of the sea."

(*Published in the All Time Library*)

HYLTON CLEAVER

THE TERM OF THRILLS

Two public schools in one town, and a twin in each school! Eric and Stanley are indistinguishable, and keep their twinship a secret. Complications, comic and grim, occur when the twins secretly visit each other's school. Credit and blame are heaped on the wrong head, and their exciting and amusing struggles in the meshes of muddle, make thrilling reading. Every page is enjoyable.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

BUTTLE BUTTS IN

Buttle was not strong in character or muscle, and was easily led into trouble. He wanted to go back to his old school, and went—as a kind of "gate-crasher"; but those who were in the secret were determined to get some fun out of the novel situation, and poor Buttle was forced into a series of scrapes. An exciting and humorous story.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

THE PHANTOM PEN

Exciting mysteries! The unknown hand that penned the evil letters! The fist that could batter bully Trumble! The parts played by the elusive Jackson and the "Rat"! The inimitable, dry and elaborate Mr. Mott! Adventure! Cass versus Hegarty in the ring! Plot and counterplot! Full of humour, and a bona fide school story that keeps the reader intent from beginning to end.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

CAPT. F. A. M. WEBSTER

THE BOY FROM THE BLUE

Living in wild Africa until sixteen years old, strong and supple as forged steel, Jim Dawson comes home to public school life. He makes no ordinary scholar: his first efforts at rugger, in the boxing ring and classroom are vigorous and amusing. But his father falls among rogues in Africa, and Jim goes back to the rescue.
This is a yarn of stirring adventure, whether centred in the African bush or school precincts.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

CARRUTHERS OF COLNHURST

Colnhurst, although a public school, had run to seed. Bullying was rife, unsporting practical jokes were the order, and sports were neglected. Charles Carruthers as a new boy of twelve suffered injustice and cruelty; but in the end won fame, not only for himself, but the school.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

THE IVORY TALISMAN

Bill Hawtrey and Fred Riley plunge into Central Africa guided by a great explorer and aided by Pompey, the native. An ivory talisman is the cause of many hair-raising perils and adventures—with wild animals—a lost tribe of Pygmies—the dreaded "Leopard Men"—and a great lost elephant cemetery, all exciting features of the mighty unknown regions of Africa.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

A. L. HAYDON

THE SKIPPER OF THE TEAM

Aylmer or Venables? The School was divided in its allegiance. Aylmer was not only a fine footballer and scholar, but a genius at acting. In disguise he could deceive his own schoolmates, except the acute Challis—and the crafty little Cowl.
A yarn of school life with really "live" characters.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

KIDNAPPED FROM DOWNWAYS

Cheng Fu, the mysterious Chinese, dominates the story. He kidnaps Roy from his school, suddenly and secretly, then takes him by air and sea to China, where exciting adventures follow one upon the other.
Surely, no English boy could want more excitement than Roy experienced.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

POLE FOR COCK HOUSE

A first-class school story. Games and sports are vividly described, particularly the great boxing match. Feuds develop into fights, rogues' alliances produce trouble, and meddlesome juniors make bad matters worse. Through all this discord strides Coke, the new school captain, a budding poet, yet a stalwart of the rugger field. Steadily he forges his way into supreme popularity, and wins honour for his house.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

T. C. BRIDGES

SONS OF THE AIR

An air pilot must be over seventeen years of age, but the Scout Master, Curtis Clinton, gains his certificate, and with Jack in his little " Moth ", fights mighty storms, insidious fog and the mysterious strange aeroplane manned by ruthless foreigners. This modern adventure story has a tense, exciting plot which never flags.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

THE SECRET OF SMOKING SWAMP

Certainly Bud Harter is the hero of this thrilling yarn. While hunting, dodging and fighting a gang of moonshiners, Billy Picton leads his lads through perils of a kind to make the bravest quail. Mighty swamps infested with flesh-eating alligators and huge rattlesnakes, filled with clinging weeds, submerged timber and shallows—such is the wild corner of Florida in which Bud Harter shows his worth.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

THE RIVER RIDERS

Keith Hedley, on the way to his uncle's lumber camp, is set upon by two rough and tough villains. He wins through to the camp, but, there he comes against the brute bully Hulke Hansen and cunning old " Granite ". The thrilling drive when chased by a pack of grey timber wolves and the adventure on the flooded river are outstanding in a tale full of breathless, stirring incidents in wildest Canada.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

MAJOR C. J. L. GILSON

THE TWELFTH MAN

Incorrigibly cheeky and daring, yet sportsmen every inch, are Buttenshaw and Slade Two. They are as enterprising and entertaining a pair of schoolboys as could be imagined. Their feud against the unpleasant master, Roach, is rollicking fun. But there is an earnest side to this book, that of the cricket pitch. The breathless thrill of a closely fought game is described with a vim that holds the reader to the last page.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

TABOO

Into the heart of dark Africa with "Cinderface", the reliable, reckless and never-despairing explorer. Across burning sand deserts and through terrifying jungles, seeking the country of the Urrjard where malignant evil broods over the Place of Death. Packed with tense moments, startling adventures and vivid descriptions, this story is neither exaggerated in detail nor improbable in incident.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)

THE SUBSTITUTES

Cricketers, and all interested in our great summer game, will enjoy this book. It is a school story with cricket as the main motive of life. There is a village cricket match, where cricket is played in the traditional style of the village green, and there is a grimly-contested inter-school match. The connection between the two makes a very interesting story.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)

E. KEBLE CHATTERTON

ACROSS THE SEVEN SEAS

Racing across the Atlantic, through Panama, out into the Pacific in a fifteen-ton yacht—surely Paul and Rodney were fortunate in having Commander Marshton, R.N., for an uncle! But it was not all plane sailing. The international crook, Hjort, did his utmost to ram and wreck the little craft. A splendid tale of the sea.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)

IN GREAT WATERS

Chinese pirates of modern days! Chang Kling's mighty submarine roves the seas from Shanghai to Plymouth, destroying and pillaging. On the trail of this ruthless and cruel sea-thief is a tiny craft, fitted only with a small quick-firer, and manned by Captain Harwood, V.C., and the two boys, Bob and Wilmer. The great game of hide-and-seek played by these two foes makes a yarn rare in plot and real in atmosphere.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)

THROUGH SEA AND SKY

The super-flying boat "Gannet" is commissioned to track down the mysterious "Black Rovers" who have stolen the formula of a terrible Z ray from Admiralty Room 909. Captain Harwood, Bob and Wilmer speed through the air at nearly three hundred miles per hour, fighting the great red aeroplane. Altogether a yarn that sets the pulse beating high with the spirit of courageous venture.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)

T. C. BRIDGES

THE SECRET OF SEVENSTONES KEY

Huge devil fish, sharks and jagged reefs surround the islands off the coast of Florida. But still greater dangers beset Mr. Linton and his family. Cunning swindlers allied to bloodthirsty ruffians attempt to defraud him of his little island with its secret of lost treasure. But the mighty "Crab" turns up, and with Sandy Linton struggles and fights with heroic energy, amid fierce hurricane and snake-infested grassland. With victory comes the great surprise.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

HYLTON CLEAVER

CAPTAINS OF DUKE'S

Cricket, boxing and rugger Captains—each with his own problems and difficulties. The descriptions of matches in each sport are exciting and real. Never to be forgotten is the schoolboy detective who, with Holmes-like flair, elucidates mysteries by original and ingenious schemes.

An entertaining and brilliantly written book in which every situation is well planned, exciting and amusing. All who read this story will greatly enjoy it.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)

GURNEY SLADE

IN LAWRENCE'S BODYGUARD

Irwin Baxter is offered the strange job of seeking a lost stela in the Near East, where he finds many adventures among Arab, Turk and Bedouin; and ultimately has the good fortune to come under Lawrence of Arabia. A first-class tale of adventure, bound up with a thread of thrilling history.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

THE DELTA PATROL

"The World's most plausible rogue" was the description of Othman Bey, given by Eddie of the Delta Squadron, Australian Imperial Forces. Certainly his cunning trickery made Victor's holiday in Egypt a venturesome affair. The author of "In Lawrence's Bodyguard" more than maintains his excellent reputation for story-writing in this tale.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

LED BY LAWRENCE

The Turks were great fighters, but the Bedouin had a fiery energy that only needed organising and unifying. This was the task of Lawrence, whose name is for ever linked to Arabia in our Empire history.

This tale tells of Jasper—young, strong and daring. He meets and works for Lawrence; and his adventures in the Secret Service, fighting and planning under his great leader, make a story the more thrilling for being based upon amazing fact.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

T. H. SCOTT

THE TREASURE TRAIL

A motor launch of marvellous speed is constructed by Sam. He and Bill meet Jake, the adventurer, who has a chart of a golden treasure in the City of the Sun, in the Amazon basin. They decide to seek the gold, but strange happenings are theirs before they reach the Evil Land.

(*Published in the Globe Adventure Library*)

FRED WISHAW

LOST IN AFRICAN JUNGLES

Twins so alike that at school they receive each other's punishments and rewards ! They are separated when Tom, rescued from the sea, is carried to Africa where he goes gold-hunting in the wilds. The adventures which lead to their meeting again make an entrancing tale.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)

W. C. METCALFE

BILLOWS AND BERGS

A story of the rough and ready days of " clipper " sailing, when a ship, however seaworthy, was more or less at the mercy of wind and wave, icebergs as big as islands and dangerous as rocks ! Here is a sea yarn that will be read more than once.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

HARRY HUNTINGDON

AN UPHILL GAME

Hugh Gauntley, prefect and brother of the Head, is pursued by mean envy, painful misunderstanding and secret plotting. The sportive junior secret society, "The Nameless Clan", provides great entertainment; the tense excitement of a keenly fought cricket match is vividly described; and the main plot is well laid and dramatically unfolded. Altogether, a truly splendid school yarn, both exciting and amusing.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

CAPT. F. W. DE VALDA

THE TREASURE OF ATÍL

The lost treasure of the ancient Aztecs! History records many hunts for this genuine mystery. Here is the story of Charles and Harry who, guided by secret plans, venture among the Yaqui Indians. They use the most modern inventions of civilization—the autogiro—the hand machine-gun—the metal diviner—but Don Leandro, the "Mexican Tiger", is a fierce competitor in the search. Every page arouses the desire to go exploring among the mighty mountains of Mexico.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

WALTER WOOD

THE ROVING TRADERS

An unusual story of the sea, in which a very reputable and original enterprise gets sadly complicated by the tangled affairs of a stowaway. Mr. Wood has a thorough knowledge of the sea and ships, and also of the fascination of foreign ports to all who travel or wish to do so.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)

MAJOR C. J. L. GILSON

THE REFUGEE

A tale of the Highwaymen who infested the roads in the eighteenth century. Dick Starfield was a man of parts, and before he took to the road had been an actor at Drury Lane. How he, impersonating a French nobleman fleeing from the Revolution, and his confederate Jack Drummond were frustrated, and brought to justice by the efforts of two sturdy lads from the Eastern Counties, make an excellent story, founded on fact.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

CAPT. MAYNE REID

THE RIFLE RANGERS

Back to the days of the Mexican war, with Capt. Haller, the fearless leader of a volunteer rifle company. Stirring deeds of bravery against terrific odds provide the material for a story that is the more thrilling for its truth in detail, and vigorous style.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

ERIC LISLE

UNDER HONOUR'S FLAG

Fortunately, Ralph had plenty of pluck and restraint. He had lived abroad and knew nothing of school life in England, yet he could pick a true friend and quickly recognised a hypocrite or a rogue. The mystery of his father's disappearance had no easy solution, but Ralph, with his knowledge of tracking, solves the problems of the lame horse and the lonely house. Interesting character study and continuous action make this a stirring yarn.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

CAPT. F. A. M. WEBSTER

WHEN STRANGE DRUMS SOUND

One of the many mysteries of Africa is the subject of this enthralling tale. Eerie mystery and thrilling adventure combine to make this tale one that must be read to a finish. How a mixed party of British and Americans go into the heart of the unknown to take a film, the amazing discoveries they make, and their hair-raising adventures in escaping from the fateful Place of Drums, all go to make this one of the most powerful of Captain Webster's African novels.

(*Published in the Treasure Library*)

A. L. HAYDON

STAND FAST, WYMONDHAM!

A first-class school yarn with several new features, coupled with the amusing sauce of the juniors. Loring, a young Australian, is attached to the house with no records or achievements on the sports field. He infuses a new spirit into his house mates, but jealousy and dislike, amongst a bad set who think more of billiards and betting than cricket, make hard going. Loring stands fast with gloves or bat and places his house high in honour.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)

CAPT. MAYNE REID

THE SCALP HUNTERS

An absorbing adventure book of the times when the American Indian roved the Prairie and Rockies, when hard-bitten men rode their mustangs, armed to the teeth and dependent for life upon a quick eye and ready hand. Caught in a buffalo charge, gripped by quicksand, parched by thirst, ambushed by Indians—such is the life of Henry Waller. Among other characters, Seguin, the scalp hunter, Rube, the wily veteran, and Moro, the horse in a thousand, stand out vividly in this stirring tale.

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

D. H. PARRY

THE SUNKEN MILLION

A million pounds-worth of gold sunk off the coast of Brazil. An old guide map to the Valley of the Golden Dead where an ancient race of Indians survive in seclusion. Two unscrupulous rogues who seek the treasure with violence and cunning. Two boys who are in the party of Colonel Wane, to whom the treasure belongs. A quaint professor who knows more than a thing or two. What more is required for a story that tingles every nerve with keen excitement ?

(*Published in the Albion Library*)

T. H. SCOTT

WIRELESS WATSON

Rumours that " Wires " Watson had been expelled from another school, and that he was a prime three-quarter on the rugger field, speed through the school. Meanwhile where did he go every Wednesday and Saturday ? " Wires " proves to be a marvellous runner, yet always puts his wireless experiments before sport. Altogether a strange fellow ! Crisp accounts of tense racing and thrilling rescues from fire and water, make this book exceptionally enjoyable.

(*Published in the Magnet Library*)